Eros and the Intoxications of Enlightenment

ON PLATO'S *Symposium*

STEVEN BERG

EROS AND THE INTOXICATIONS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

SUNY series in Ancient Greek Philosophy

Anthony Preus, editor

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On Plato's Symposium

STEVEN BERG

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INTRODUCTION

We are the inheritors of the tradition of the enlightenment. Yet we are cut off from the sources of enlightenment. Curious doctrines and novel orthodoxies have overcast our mental horizon so completely that the peaks of human life have become almost invisible to us. In such a climate it is inevitable that the exceptional character of the city in which Socrates was born and died should be obscured. Socrates' Athens was a city in which pre-Socratic philosophy and its popular dissemination had so infected the opinions of her citizens that her tragic and comic poets could ridicule the gods with virtual impunity in the midst of her most sacred religious festivals and her unofficial head of state could boast of his association with a man who declared the sun to be a burning stone and not a god. Science and enlightened poetry had so weakened traditional piety that the check upon man's ambition that the terrible and beautiful gods of the poets had once posed was overturned. As a consequence, shame and fear were replaced by daring and hope, and men cast aside obedience to take up the imitation of the majesty of the waning gods: stripped of the enveloping horizon the immortals had once established for all things mortal, the Athenians sought an immortality of their own devising through the erection of "undying memorials of good and evil."[1]

This audacious and ultimately ruinous ambition of the Athenians—for all of its rapacity and occasional brutality—was nonetheless transfigured by the mingling of its spirited transgression of once sacred boundaries with the longing of an eros for the beautiful. The suffusion of political ambition with erotic desire was a hallmark of Athenian democracy from its putative origins in the pederastic love of the tyrannicides, Harmondius and Aristogeiton; it nevertheless reached its apex in the love of the demos for that most beautiful of Athenian youths who promised to realize the most vaunting of their imperial hopes: as Thucydides reports, when the Athenians threw in their lot with Alcibiades and his plans for the conquest of Sicily "eros swooped down on all alike."[2] The Athenians' erotic longing for the tyrant in their midst was transformed into a longing to contemplate new and distant spectacles, lay their hands upon eternal treasure, and encompass the entire world within their reach and scope.[3] Athenian imperialism was not the grim and austere imperialism of Rome—it was an imperialism shot

through with the effects of enlightenment and animated by the frenzy of erotic desire. It was the city striving to transcend all the limits endemic to the city in the attempt to embrace the whole and integrate into its life the truth of man as man. For, as Plato instructs us, the core of what it is to be human is eros, the eros for the truth about the whole of things. Athens is not the only enlightened city to have existed on the face of the earth, but she is the only enlightened city to have made the implicit claim to be the proper home for man at his peak, naked in his nature, divested of the alien constraints of convention and law. In this she had no predecessor and has found no imitator. Athens was the enlightened city par excellence.

If we wish to remind ourselves of the exceptional character of Athens, we must turn to the *Symposium* of Plato, for the *Symposium* is not only the dialogue in which Plato takes up the problem of the nature of eros, it is also the dialogue in which he offers his portrait of this enlightened and eroticized city. Through the arguments of the work, he uncovers simultaneously the true character of eros and the true character of Athens. The latter is displayed in the series of speeches offered by the symposiasts at Agathon's banquet, all of whom are Athenian citizens and all of whom—with the notable exceptions of Aristophanes and Socrates—are avid students of the sophists. The former is displayed first and foremost in the speech of Socrates wherein the truth of eros is revealed to be identical with Socrates' practice of erotics. Plato displays Socrates in his relation to Agathon and his guests and thereby his relation to Athens and the Athenian enlightenment.

If the claims of enlightened Athens, as articulated above all in the speeches of Phaedrus, Pausanias, and Eryximachus, could have been sustained, then Socrates should have found his proper home in the city of his birth. Socrates' trial and execution confute these claims. Though one might believe that Socrates' trial was simply the unfortunate consequence of the accidental decline of enlightened Athens and the disappointment of the Athenians' eroticized imperial ambitions, Plato, through the speeches of his characters, demonstrates the necessity and inevitability of this decline and disappointment. The brutal return to a crude piety rooted in a renewed reverence for the just and punitive gods exhibited in the reaction to the desecration of the Hermae was, according to Plato, the necessary result of the fact that the erotic frenzy ingredient in Athens' imperialism was in principle incompatible with her democratic regime and the piety that supported it. Even more essentially, Athens' attempt to integrate eros into the life of the city necessarily stood at odds with the fact that eros, the most private of human passions, resists all efforts to make it public. Socrates' Athens was a city living under a constant strain—it was essentially unstable and always verging on flying apart at the seams. On another higher level, Plato shows that while the preeminence of the poets within Athens and the incorporation of the beautiful gods into her civic piety were a precondition for Socrates'

practice of erotics, that same practice worked to eliminate the last vestiges of these beautiful gods and ultimately brought the preeminence of the poets within Athens to an end. Nietzsche was simply following Plato's lead when he declared Socrates to be the destroyer of the Homeric gods in general and Dionysus, the patron gods of the dramatic poets, in particular.[4]

Socrates declares in the *Republic* that the city as such is the greatest sophist. In the *Symposium* he makes clear that Athens was the greatest of cities. The *Symposium*, therefore, is not only a compliment to the *Republic* and its teaching concerning the essential limits of the city, it also takes its place among that series of Platonic dialogues devoted to the examination of the pretensions of the sophists. It is no accident, therefore, that all of the chief speakers within the dialogue, with the exception of Aristophanes, make their first appearance in the Protagoras, that dialogue in which Socrates sets out to refute the most prominent of the men who styled themselves practitioners of the sophistic "art." As Hippias attests near the center of the *Protagoras* (337c–d), the sophists ply their trade in the light of the recognition of the primary distinction between convention or law (*nomos*) and nature. Practically speaking, they attempt to live a life according to nature, while, nevertheless, going public and receiving conventional distinction in terms of wealth and honor. They wish to permit nature to become visible as a standard within the city—the realm dominated by convention or law—by replacing the politically beautiful or the noble with what is beautiful by nature: wisdom. Protagoras indeed boasts that he has taken this public display of nature further than any of his predecessors, who, though they were in fact sophists or wise men, obscured this fact by disguising their art and masquerading as poets, prophets, gymnastic trainers, or teachers of music. Protagoras, however, has dispensed with such concealments and openly declares himself to be precisely what he is, while, at the same time and on this very basis, receiving the broadest sort of conventional acclaim (316d–317c; *Hippias Major* 281a–282e). He has, more than any other, effectively reconciled nature and convention or allowed nature to become the basis for conventional appraisals of worth.

Just as the hollowness of Protagoras' claims are displayed in the dialogue that bears his name, so Plato shows in the *Symposium* that the implicit claim of enlightened Athens to combine seamlessly the requirements of man as man (nature) with the requirements of the city (political necessity and law) cannot be sustained. Even that city that was most congenial to Socrates and his philosophy, that was indeed an indispensable precondition for his particular philosophic practice, was a place in which Socrates and his life were in constant jeopardy. Socrates' life of inquiry took its course in the midst of a city of beautiful dreamers who, upon "awakening" from their dreams, flung themselves into a bestial orgy of retribution and retaliation against those they believed to have been responsible for their enchantment.

As one of the greatest students of Plato has insisted and as the *Symposium* abundantly confirms, in the practice of his philosophy Socrates did indeed "ride a tiger."[5] This study of the *Symposium* seeks to understand precisely what this means and what it implies about the nature of Socratic philosophy and the character of the city that served as its perilous vehicle.

PART ONE

ATHENS AND ENLIGHTENMENT

ONE

SOCRATES MADE BEAUTIFUL

If the starting point of the *Republic*'s inquiry into justice is the construction of the just city, the starting point of the *Symposium*'s inquiry into love is the portrayal of the city made beautiful through its love of the beautiful—Athens. At the beginning of the *Republic* Socrates recounts how he went down to the Piraeus with Glaucon to view a novel religious festival. Afterward Glaucon and Socrates were on their way back up to Athens when they were halted by Polemarchus and his friends and persuaded to go back down to the Pireaus. The incomplete ascent with which the *Republic* begins reflects the fact that at the peak of its argument, where the question of justice is superseded by that of the good—the "greatest thing to be learned," as Socrates calls it—Socrates confesses to Glaucon that he is incapable of providing an account of the good, and offers instead an "ugly" image of the offspring of the good (506c–e). The *Symposium* begins as Apollodorus, a fanatical devotee of Socrates, is explaining to a nameless comrade how, just the other day, he was making his way from his home in Phaleron up to Athens when he was hailed by Glaucon who wished to question him about Agathon's party and the erotic speeches given there. Together they ascended to Athens while Glaucon listened to the very account of the banquet that Apollodorus is now ready to repeat to another curious Athenian a few days later. At the apparent peak of the argument of the dialogue—precisely where we would expect to find an account of the good as the highest object of erotic desire—we are given instead a description of the beautiful itself as the final "thing to be learned." In the *Republic*, however, Socrates had distinguished the good from both the just and the beautiful in his insistence that knowledge of anything else in the absence of knowledge of the good was incomplete and unprofitable and that, therefore, the good must be said to be the greatest thing to be learned (505a–506a).

Taken together, the opening actions and culminating arguments of the *Republic* and the *Symposium* illustrate the character of what Socrates called

his "second sailing." In the course of his philosophizing, Socrates found it necessary to turn away from any attempt to comprehend the whole of things and the principle of the whole directly and instead examine the whole and the good in the speeches of men, wherein the good appears as either the just or the beautiful. The implication of the completion of the ascent at the opening of the *Symposium* that Glaucon was forced to break off at the opening of the *Republic* seems to be that the examination of the good in terms of the beautiful is somehow more revealing of the true character of the good than the examination of the just. This implication is lent some confirmation by the fact that the traditional subtitle of the *Republic* is "On the Just," whereas that of the *Symposium* is "On the Good."

It was, above all else, the incorporation of the poets into the life of the city—the civic status allotted to tragedy and comedy—that proved to be the first cause of Athens' love of the beautiful. The beautiful gods of the poets became, as it were, the beautiful gods of the city of Athens; more precisely, and in contrast to conditions prevailing in such law-abiding regimes as Sparta and Crete, the presence of the poets in Athens ensured that the gods of Homer and Hesiod were not reduced there to the status of civic deities, that is, to the punitive gods who are mere props for the law and its justice. The poets, then, through preserving the beauty of the gods, ensured that they are not simply objects of fear, but the possible objects of an erotic longing that set its sights beyond the horizon of the law. The public preeminence of the poets within Athens is alluded to at the very opening of the dialogue. The events and speeches about which both Glaucon and Apollodorus' nameless comrade wish to be informed concern the poet Agathon's party in celebration of the victory of his tragedy in the city's dramatic contest.

Glaucon said that he had heard about the party from a certain Phoinex, but that he had had nothing definite to say (172b). Though Glaucon believed that Apollodorus was himself present at the banquet and could therefore provide him with a clear account, Apollodorus could not possibly have been one of the guests at Agathon's house that evening—the event took place so long ago that he and Glaucon were mere boys at the time (173a). In fact, Apollodorus has heard about it from the same person who is the source of Phoinex's information: Aristodemus (173b). In the dissemination of the speeches regarding Agathon's banquet, temporal distortion—an event from long ago takes on the aspect of the virtually present—has combined with obfuscation—nothing definite is known about this event—in such a way as to preserve the past, while nonetheless blotting out its true form.

Since both Glaucon and the comrade are interested in not merely gossip concerning Agathon's banquet, but an account of the erotic speeches given there (172b, 173e), the real issue raised by the opening of the dialogue seems to be that of the distortions involved in the diffusion of Socrates' philosophy

into the city. The *Symposium* demonstrates *ad oculos* that the primary agents of this diffusion and distortion are Socrates' own followers. Apollodorus is representative here. Though he makes available Socrates speeches to those who stand outside his circle, at the same time he attempts to transmit his own understanding of philosophy that he has somehow derived from his acquaintance with Socrates: all human existence is misery and Socrates and his philosophy, as transcending the human-all-too-human, are alone worthwhile (173a, 173d–e). Socrates is for him a new god: a god made man. His man-god, however, lacks the power to redeem. He is a divine touchstone who shows forth the fundamental truth about human life—it is not worth living—without transforming it in the least.[1] By the end of the dialogue, the speech of Alcibiades will show that Apollodorus is far from being an isolated case.

Socrates appears to his followers as a visible god who, as such, banishes the invisible gods of the tradition. At least in the minds of his youthful devotees he has displaced the gods of the city. Since in the case of Athens, however, the gods of the city have been fused with the gods of the poets, Socrates, in the diffusion of his philosophy, has had the effect of displacing the gods of the poets, as well.

If Apollodorus' devotion to Socrates is equivalent to a pity and contempt for everyone else,[2] Aristodemus' attachment seems more genuine: Apollodorus says that at the time of the banquet he was the one most in love with Socrates (173b). His preservation of the erotic speeches, therefore, seems to be both a labor of love and in the service of self-knowledge. The source of Apollodorus' speeches is much closer to the reality of Socrates and his philosophy than Apollodorus could ever be. Still, in his appearance he is a simulacrum of Socrates—he is always unshod (173b)—and if he is, as the source of the speeches, most proximate to him, he is, at the same time, responsible for their separation from Socrates himself. In another sense, Apollodorus and Aristodemus represent two sides of one coin as far as the effects of the dissemination of Socrates' speeches are concerned: Apollodorus in his speech joins Socrates and his philosophy to the beauty and perfection of the gods, while Aristodemus in his deeds separates Socrates "personal idiosyncrasies"—his ugliness and defectiveness—from his philosophy. Both, therefore, represent the fragmentation of the whole man that allows philosophy to appear in an alien guise. On the evening of Agathon's party, Socrates himself seems to have succumbed to these alien appearances: contrary to his usual habit, he is "freshly bathed and sporting fancy slippers" (174a). He has, as he says, "beautified" himself, speaking of his ugliness as if it were a cloak or covering that he could discard at will. This is indeed the claim that Alcibiades makes about him in his speech. That just the opposite is the case is here made clear: it is this "beautification" that constitutes a cloak or cover.

In this state, making his way to Agathon's house, Socrates chances upon Aristodemus in the semblance of his unreconstructed self. He seizes upon this opportunity to suggest that the unseemly Aristodemus accompany him, though uninvited, to the beautiful poet's house. By these means, Socrates puts his mind to reversing the effects of the diffusion of his philosophy among the Athenians. He insists that his ugliness—his knowledge of ignorance and perplexity—is not an ironical concealment of his wisdom. He is not a god.[3] That he reattaches himself to the ugly appearance he has been forced to discard in decking himself out for the poet's party, and does so despite the fact that the poet himself has left Aristodemus off the guest list, seems to suggest that not only the loose lips of the acolyte, but the contrivances of the poet's art, as well, can only operate to effect this separation. Yet the fact that Socrates and Aristodemus go together to the poet's house and that they have been paired by Plato in his work leads us to conclude that a certain employment of the poetic art provides for putting back together what the diffusion of philosophy into the city pulls apart. If Plato portrays a "Socrates become beautiful and young,"[4] he must nevertheless somehow preserve in this portrayal Socrates' knowledge of ignorance and perplexity as the center of his philosophizing. In the terms of the topic of the banquet, Plato, through his Socrates, must both eulogize eros and deny the poet's claims that eros is the "most beautiful of gods."[5]

Agathon's celebration is a two-day affair, but Socrates would not be drawn into the festivities of the first day on account of his antipathy to the crowd. The passion he experiences in the face of the multitude, however, is not Apollodorian contempt, but fear (174a). Agathon obviously does not share Socrates' fear of the crowd (194b). The powers of his art provide him with a shield against the dangers ingredient in association with the multitude. Is the same fear that kept Socrates away from the first day of Agathon's celebrations, encouraging him to attend the second? Does Socrates wish to persuade Agathon to put his powers in the service of Socrates and his philosophy as a defense against the multitude? This would explain why he has taken this unprecedented trouble over his toilet. He wishes to worm his way into Agathon's good graces by sharing on this evening the concern that lies closest to Agathon's heart: decorum. This assumption, however, is shaken in the face of the casual shamelessness with which Socrates invites his shabby friend to Agathon's "black-tie affair." Would one come closer to the truth, then, if one were to conceive of his "going beautiful to the beautiful" as a species of mockery of Agathon's pretensions: the clown aping the ballerina?[6] If so it would be an expression of Socrates' hubris. Agathon believes this to be the motive force behind the first words Socrates speaks to him upon his tardy arrival (175e). Through the action at the opening of the *Symposium*, then, Plato appears to root Socrates' insistence on the inseparability of his philosophy from his defectiveness and humanity in shamelessness and hubris:

if philosophy is to reappropriate what is most its own in the face of the distortions involved in its diffusion, it must violate conventional propriety. It cannot be afraid of flaunting and vaunting its ugliness.

Having secured Aristodemus' complicity in his scheme to foist an uninvited guest upon his host, Socrates bids him follow so that they may change and corrupt the proverb according to which the good go to the feasts of the good uninvited (174b). The corruption seems to lie in the fact that Agathon is good in name alone: what all call good and reward with the highest honors is in fact merely the beautiful—the good and the beautiful are only conventionally the same. Socrates' reappropriation of the private truth of his philosophy in the face of its public diffusion and fragmentation entails, in the first instance, distinguishing the beautiful and the good. Here is the root of all Socrates' improprieties. Putting himself back together requires breaking up this specious unity. As we will see, and as Aristodemus is about to suggest,[7] this separation has as its necessary corollary the demonstration of the goodness of the ugliness or defectiveness of Socrates' philosophy. Separating the beautiful and the good and attaching the latter to the ugly, however, necessarily results in the demolition of the gods of the poets.

The first half of Plato's introduction to the speeches of the *Symposium* then seems primarily concerned with the relation of Socrates to these gods. Socrates displaces the gods of the poets both insofar as he appears in the eyes of his followers as a novel divinity and insofar as he attempts to recover his humanity and with it the truth of his philosophy in the wake of this distortion. Given that Athenian piety has been profoundly affected by the teachings of the poets regarding the gods, one must conclude that Socrates' presence within Athens cannot help having profound and far-reaching consequences for Athenian piety. Whether Socrates allows himself to be taken for a god or insists upon his humanity, the gods of the Athenians are under threat.

The *Symposium* nearly ends with the "advent" of Alcibiades and is set one year prior to the embarkation of the Sicilian expedition of which Alcibiades was the chief architect and instigator.[8] Moreover, the dialogue seems to be Plato's representation of the truth behind the accusation against Alcibiades that robbed him of the command of that expedition and sent him into exile—namely, that Alcibiades had mocked the Eleusinian mysteries at a banquet the year before the mutilation of the Hermae and might, therefore, plausibly be associated with that latter crime. Plato clears Alcibiades of this charge while showing that his friend Socrates was involved in what the Athenians could only construe as still grosser impiety. Behind the Athenians' suspicion of Alcibiades, Plato suggests, was his association with Socrates: in the eyes of the multitude, any man who was as intimate with Socrates as was Alcibiades could never be an adherent to traditional piety.[9] The conflict between Alcibiades and Athens, therefore, is a foreground conflict—behind it

lies the conflict between Socrates and Athens. That the story of the banquet is now, years after the fact, current gossip and that Apollodorus is willing without hesitation to tell the tale to all comers indicates that the conflict between Athens and Alcibaides has been resolved. The dialogue must take place, therefore, after Alcibiades has returned from exile and reconciled himself with the citizens of his native city.[10] That this reconciliation will prove to be temporary points to the irresolvable character of the tension between Socrates and Athens in regard to the question of piety and to the limits, therefore, of Athenian enlightenment. If those limits were first displayed in the events surrounding the Sicilian expedition, they appeared finally and most vividly in the trial and death of Socrates.

The first half of Plato's introduction to the speeches of the *Symposium* then is concerned primarily with Socrates' relation to the gods of the poets; its second half highlights Socrates' relation to these poets themselves. The transition between the first and second halves, however, is made by means of a reference to a non-Athenian poet who was said to have been, like Socrates, the brunt of the Athenians' prosecutorial wrath: Homer.[11]

According to Socrates, the corruption of the proverb for which he and Aristodemus will be responsible is as nothing next to the outrage (*hubris*) that Homer had already committed upon it, for he made a bad man go uninvited to the feast of the good (174b–c).[12] Socrates puts himself in the same camp as the father of all poets and suggests that, despite the weight of tradition that claims Homer as the foundation for all conventional Greek notions of virtue, both he and Socrates are in fact "criminals" insofar as they corrupt and violate conventional wisdom. He and Socrates belong together, according to Socrates, as standing outside the city in a way that the tragic and comic poets, who have their official place within the political realm, do not. Homer's wisdom cannot be the same as that of the tragic and comic poets and must either be coextensive or compatible with Socrates' own.

If Socrates' corruption reveals the truth that conventional wisdom conceals, his friend Homer's "hubris" must perform a similar exposé. In fact, in the incidents from the *Iliad* to which Socrates refers, Homer, like Socrates, makes a sharp distinction between what is conventionally honored and what is genuinely good. In *Book Two* Menelaus goes to his brother Agamemnon's feast without an invitation immediately after Agamemnon through his own actions has completely undermined his attempt to lead the Achaean war effort.[13] If it is true that Agamemnon is one of the stronger warriors at Troy, he nonetheless lacks all strength of mind and prudence. He enjoys preeminence by convention alone.[14] By contrast, in *Book Seventeen*, Agamemnon's brother is shown to be, if a lesser fighter, a more intelligent man and his reticence in battle is a sign of this intelligence: he does not consider retreat in the face of overwhelming odds, but rather dying needlessly in a vain display of thoughtless courage to be shameful.[15] Menelaus implicitly

distinguishes between the noble or beautiful and the good and decides for the superiority of the latter. When confronted with insurmountable opposition, Menelaus retreats in good order and seeks an ally to come to his aid.[16] In this he resembles Socrates who, at the close of Alcibiades' speech, will be shown retreating in good order (221a–b), and, here at the beginning of the *Symposium*, seeks allies in Homer and Aristodemus for what turns out to be his advance against the tragic and comic poets.

Socrates now seals this alliance by quoting a line from the *Iliad* that casts himself in the role of Diomedes and Aristodemus in the role of Odysseus immediately before undertaking their famous night raid against the Trojan camp (174d). Far from making his way to Agathon's banquet in order to forge an alliance with his host, it would seem, Socrates is conducting espionage and plotting a sneak attack against him. The offensive that has forced Socrates onto a war footing, however, can only be that of Aristophanes' *Clouds*.[17] Socrates and Aristodemus going behind enemy lines to attack the poets on their own terrain then, though overtly appearing as a contest with Agathon, involves primarily a counterattack against Aristophanes. It would seem that what is attracting Socrates to the banquet has little to do with the tragic poet and his victory and everything to do with the promise of the comic poet's presence there (213c). Socrates will eagerly seize upon Eryximachus' proposal to make eros the topic of the evening's conversation because it is precisely this topic about which he and Aristophanes claim to have particular knowledge (177e, 189c–d). It is precisely on this terrain that a contest between Aristophanes' poetic wisdom and Socrates' philosophy must be waged.

If Socrates is to confront the wisdom of Aristophanes, therefore, it would seem to be necessary to guarantee somehow that the praise of eros be made the topic of conversation at Agathon's dinner. It is, of course, ultimately Plato who has scripted the banquet such that the evening's entertainment will consist of speeches about eros. We suspect, therefore, that the triple entente of poet, philosopher, and lover can be reduced to a pair insofar as Plato fills the roles of both Homer and Aristodemus. That Homer is the only writer precedent to Plato who can be said to rival his poetic capacity is clear; that Aristodemus also points to Plato is perhaps less obvious. Like Plato, however, Aristodemus is the "silent source" for the account of Agathon's banquet: without being the narrator of the speeches he is responsible for all that the narrator has to say. The "two going together" who stand against the preeminence of the tragic and comic poets are Socrates and Plato. It would seem that only through the art of writing of Plato can the wisdom of the Athenian poets be shown to be of second rank in relation to Socrates' erotics.

As Socrates makes his way to Agathon's banquet in the company of Aristodemus, he suddenly halts and "turns his mind to himself" (174d),

compelling Aristodemus to go on without him. Socrates delays and turns away from his contest with the poets in order to reflect in solitude upon himself and what is most his own. For Socrates, his contest with the poets is not, as it is at least for Agathon who basks in the glow of his newly won victory, primarily a matter of besting his opponents. It is a means to self-knowledge. The need to demonstrate the goodness of philosophy, despite its artlessness, powerlessness, and lack of defense before the city, could hardly be a question of humbling the poets. The issue at stake is the accurate assessment of the nature and worth of the very activity in which Socrates is now engaged—thinking. Can a human being find his chief good and greatest pleasure in thought and the source of thinking—perplexity—or does the poverty and ignorance at the heart of all thinking rather uncover the worthlessness and wretchedness of the human state in comparison to the beauty of divine wisdom? Agathon is the living embodiment of the apparent goodness of the beauty of such wisdom. Moreover, he links that beauty tightly to the Athenian context. If the demonstration of the goodness of philosophy involves going to war against the wisdom of the poets, this equally entails going to war against the wisdom of Athens. Making clear the goodness of philosophy requires putting the philosopher in mortal peril.

When Aristodemus, unseemly and unshod, arrives at his door, Agathon dispels the awkwardness of the situation through the beauty of his speech: he annuls Socrates' disruption of the beautiful order he has established for the evening by pretending that not Aristodemus' presence, but his absence would constitute a breech of protocol (174e). He wishes to exercise a similar magic in regard to Socrates' delay and sends his slave-boy to persuade Socrates to cease to be "out of place" (*atopon*). That Socrates, thanks in part to Aristodemus' insistence, persists in his eccentric behavior indicates that he is a surd in any overarching order even or especially that of the beautiful (175a–b).

This may appear surprising given that, as Agathon shows, the beautiful order associated with Athens at her peak is understood by the Athenians themselves to be the ground of the most unfettered liberty. Agathon exhorts his slaves to prepare dinner as if they themselves were hosting the party and plied their art, as Agathon plies his, not under the weight of necessity and compulsion, but for the sake of sweet praise alone (175b). The noble is to be the motive for all action, even that of the lowest slave. Beautiful speech is a sufficient cause of the establishment of a beautiful order in which necessity has been transcended or suppressed and perfect liberty left to flourish unencumbered by restraint. Should not the freedom afforded by such a context provide a perfect refuge for Socrates and his thinking?[18]

The Agathonian or Athenian dream of an order in which compulsion dissolves in the light of the beautiful, however, requires the extermination of the hiddenness and privacy that is the hallmark of all thinking. If every

activity is to be undertaken in the interest of noble praise, then every activity must enjoy the publicity required as a precondition for such praise—it is not simply the just, but also the beautiful that ultimately points in the direction of the total communism of Socrates' City in Speech. Socrates, therefore, cannot help but cast a long shadow under the brilliant glare of the beautiful.

Socrates' necessary recalcitrance acts to compel Agathon to recognize the necessity of the just: when Socrates arrives and responds to Agathon's charming greeting with what appears to be a barely concealed insult, Agathon finally loses his composure and declares: "You are hubristic Socrates. A little later we shall go to trial, you and I, about our wisdom with Dionysus as a judge" (175d–e). If it was the poets who instilled in the Athenians their devotion to the beautiful that made possible the liberty for which democratic Athens was justly famous, it was also a poet who set the stage for the trial of Socrates by demonstrating publicly that the essentially private nature of thinking cannot help seeping into the public realm and in doing so show itself as incompatible with the public order of the city.[19]

The distinction between the public wisdom of the poet and the private nature of Socrates' thought and his erotics is the real issue at stake in what Agathon understands to be Socrates' crudely ironical and insulting "praise" of his wisdom (175d–e). Though Agathon's concern with praise leads him to detect, not entirely without warrant, blame and ridicule in Socrates' words, Socrates is above all remarking upon an aspect of the poet's art that is the foundation of its power. Upon Socrates' arrival, Agathon invites him to lay down next to him so that, through their touching, Agathon may share in the "piece of wisdom" that he presumes Socrates has apprehended. Socrates expands Agathon's conceit to a full-blown metaphor and denies that the transmission of wisdom is something similar to water passing from one vessel to another through a thread. In this way he mocks what he takes to be Agathon's suggestion that wisdom can be sexually transmitted—that it could simply overflow from an active source into a passive receptacle—but at the same time implies that his own philosophizing is as sequestered, intimate, and selective as erotic coupling. By contrast, Agathon's wisdom is a grossly public affair—it has "flashed out" before more than thirty thousand Greeks—and its reception requires only the silent acquiescence of the spectator—his audience simply opened their ears and let Agathon's speeches pour in (175e).

Yet it is just this public character of the poet's wisdom that seems to lend it the advantage: poetry's ability to lead the multitude, its psychogogic power through which it compels the ordinary man to laugh and cry and, at a maximum, molds the character of a nation, seems to allow so perfectly for the combination of knowledge and rule that those over whom poetry exercises its sway fail even to detect their subordination. This power certainly lends Agathon his confidence in his imagined trial with Socrates: in the

political setting of a courtroom presided over by the publicly acknowledged god of the poets, Socrates' private art of speaking could not help but appear as "worthless" (*phaulos*) and "disputable as a dream" (175e). The beautiful in its publicity seems to enjoy a virtue that the good itself lacks.[20]

Be that as it may, once justice and the law have invaded and disrupted the beautiful order established by Agathon, it becomes plausible that the man who will turn out to represent the law and legislation among the evening's speakers will take over the direction of the banquet's proceedings. Pausanias will prove, however, to represent not so much the law as the logical consequences of Athens' devotion to the beautiful in relation to the law: Pausanias' speech will prove to be a "lawful" proposal for the overturning of the law.

At the moment, Pausanias conspires with the doctor Eryximachus to overturn the ancestral or conventional order established for Greek banquets and institute a wholly new regime: instead of the usual drinking and singing of hymns, a series of speeches in praise of the god Eros is to be the core of the evening's entertainments (176a–177d). According to Eryximachus, this proposal owes its origin to Phaedrus (177a), his friend and fellow student of the sophists. What Pausanias, Phaedrus, and Eryximachus propose to do is to take Eros from out of the shadows and obscurity that the poets have left him in (177c), in order to give him public honors as a "big and important god" (177b). They continue with the elimination of the private ingredient in the Athenian conflation of the beautiful and the good and reveal, by implication, what would be required to fulfill this ambition. It is Eryximachus who proves to represent this ambition at its highest pitch and so it is only fitting that he, with his presumption to scientific wisdom, now becomes the guide in setting the course for the rest of the evening.

If eros is to be made an item of public intercourse, something more than mere beautiful speeches is required: one would have to possess a ruling science endued with the power to master and transform human nature. This is implied first in Eryximachus' expulsion of the flute-girl in the interest of allowing erotic intercourse (albeit in speech) between men and youths (all citizens of the city) to prevail (176e). Heterosexual eros—which always, even in the case of the prostitute, implies the possibility of the generation of offspring and so points to the family and the establishment of the private realm—is to be abolished in favor of nongenerative homoerotic unions. But the elimination of women and the family means the elimination of the sacred—its rooting out from public and political life. This is precisely the subterranean theme of Eryximachus' next proposal. His recommendation that drinking and drunkenness be suppressed (176c–d) indicates his support for the extirpation of what Plato's Athenian stranger insists is the truth of "drunkenness itself"—namely, hope and fear, the passions of the soul that lie at the root of all piety.[21]

To reengineer human beings such that hope and fear would cease to be operative within human affairs, however, would require that one possess a psychology of sufficient depth and comprehensiveness and a psychiatry of sufficient power to effect the result. One would need a medical science of soul that would include both a diagnostic and a therapeutic art.[22] That Eryximachus lacks either is made clear by his attempt to divide the guests at the banquet into classes in the light of his scientific understanding of drunkenness: he offers not a psychological, but a strictly physiological account of each individual's capacity in this regard and is forced, as he himself admits, to leave Socrates "out of account" (176c). Not only is a physiology, in its reduction of soul to body, unable to account for the experiences of soul, but it is unable to account for the reality of mind.[23] No physiology can explain how Socrates can drink everyone under the table while remaining perfectly lucid in his thought. Pre-Socratic materialism, and the cosmology elaborated on its basis, finds itself, on the one hand, unable to provide an analysis of the origin of the false opinions about the first things it so deplores (the nearly universal belief that the gods exist and are the highest beings), and, on the other hand, impotent when called to reflect upon and account for its own thinking about the whole and its first principles. It can give no account of the source of its own putatively comprehensive account. Socrates, as representing philosophical self-reflection at its peak (philosophy as necessarily including and based upon self-knowledge), is just as much a surd in the beautiful order of the pre-Socratic cosmos as he is in the beautiful order of Athens' regime.

Lacking self-knowledge, Eryximachus, whose physiological understanding of drunkenness leads him to declare it to be merely a "hard thing" for human beings that ought on all occasions to be eschewed (176d), must himself fall prey to the drunkenness he condemns: like Pausanias before him, but more thoroughly and unreservedly, he will entertain in his speech the most unbounded and groundless hopes in regard to the possibilities for enlightenment on the political plane. He knows nothing of the impossibilities involved in the political rule of wisdom that Socrates demonstrates so abundantly in the arguments of the *Republic*. Given the self-undermining character of Eryximachus' materialist presuppositions then, Socrates can now, without further ado, take over the direction of the conduct of the banquet (177d). In doing so, he dispenses with Eryximachus democratic procedure—a procedure that indicated Eryximachus' confidence in the perfect compatibility of thoroughgoing political enlightenment and Athenian democracy. Socrates performs a coup d'etat when he cancels the vote that was about to be held as to whether or not speeches on eros were to be put at the top of the evening's agenda. If we discount Socrates' appeal to Agathon and Pausanias—whom he includes simply on account of their love affair—it is really only Aristophanes whom he takes as his co-conspirator in this coup (177e).

Only Socrates and Aristophanes can make a serious claim to possesses knowledge of soul and knowledge of the human things and, therefore, self-knowledge. It was Aristophanes' claim in the *Clouds*, however, that Socrates lacked such knowledge.[24] Socrates has now come to dispute that claim and test his widsom against that of Aristophanes. That the question of eros is the key to knowledge of soul and knowledge of the human things both Socrates and Aristophanes agree. Socrates' psychology, however, employs two principles in its analysis of soul: eros and *thumos*. According to the arguments of the *Symposium*, Aristophanes' knowledge of soul proves defective in its failure to discriminate with sufficient clarity between these two principles. In demonstrating this failure, Plato and his Socrates take Homer as their ally: as in the case of the *Republic* and its account of the just, Homer's understanding of *thumos* will prove indispensable to the arguments of the *Symposium* and its account of love.

TWO

PHAEDRUS: PHAEDRUS' BEST CITY IN SPEECH

In accordance with Eyximachus' suggestion and Socrates' command (177d–e), Phaedrus offers the first eulogy of Eros. One of the puzzles of Phaedrus' speech is the essential ambiguity of his account of the divinity of Eros. At the opening of his speech, he appeals to Hesiod and Parmenides in order to establish the antiquity of the god and in doing so comes very close to arguing that Eros is simply a natural principle. It is, at any rate, the first of the gods "devised" by becoming (178b). Throughout the rest of his speech, however, Eros is treated as the passion in the soul of the lover that is the indirect cause of moral virtue. Eros appears first as something like a cosmological or natural principle and then as a psychological principle of conventional conduct. Why either should be identified with a god, let alone the same god, is difficult to see. We have only the authority of Hesiod and Parmenides (178b), in the one case, and the rhetoric of Phaedrus, in the other—he speaks of the lover as having "the god within him"(180b)—as a ground for our belief in the divinity of Eros. Not surprisingly, it will prove to be the case that Phaedrus understands the ground for his teaching regarding the divinity of Eros to be neither a cosmology nor a psychology, but a novel art of speaking that combines poetry and political rhetoric in equal measure.

Having asserted the antiquity of the god eros, Phaedrus argues, on the basis of the conventional identification of the old with the good,[1] that Eros is the cause of the greatest goods and that its causal power is displayed in the relationship between lover and beloved: each is a great good for the other, he initially appears to claim (178c). It soon becomes evident, however, that, given the fact that only the lover is animated by Eros, Eros must act as a cause of the good in entirely different ways for lover and beloved. In fact, Phaedrus argues that the presence of love in the lover acts as a cause

of the good exclusively for the beloved (179a–b). The lover becomes useful for the beloved precisely insofar as he pursues not the good, but the beautiful (178d). The lover's primary object of pursuit, however, is not the beauty of the beloved, but the politically beautiful or the noble. The lover desires to embody in his own person the beautiful or noble life. The desire for the beautiful so understood is then the offspring of a recoil before the ugly or the shameful (178c–d). Lover and beloved are distinguishable as much by the presence and absence of shame as that of love.

Since the lover then is the "real man" (*aner*) who would choose death before dishonor as long as he is under the watchful eyes of his beloved, a city composed of an army of lovers would, by Phaedrus' account, prove invincible (178e–179a)—she would vanquish all and rule over all and her greatness would be that of universal empire. Eros as instilling the desire for the politically beautiful is the cause of the political good. It is the most useful of political passions. Phaedrus' beloved then appears to be the city of Athens surrounded by her citizen-lovers who "use their bodies as if they were alien to them and their minds as most their own in order to accomplish anything on her behalf."[2] Though Phaedrus begins this portion of his speech by seeming to identify the old with the ancestral and thereby to associate Eros' antiquity with the venerability of traditional morality (178b), he has, in fact, subordinated the ancestral to an entirely novel understanding according to which the old means not the ways of one's fathers, but the ways that transcend any particular city and its traditional order: the ways that all cities have always practiced in deed, whatever they have claimed to practice in speech. As Thucydides' Athenians assert on the island of Melos, each city has everywhere and always sought to rule over all others.[3] In offering his account of Eros, Phaedrus is simultaneously articulating an account of the essential nature of political life: Phaedrus' erotics is subordinated to a "Machiavellian" political science.

It seems to be the case that, according to this science, the distinction between traditional moral virtue and the end that the city has always made that moral virtue serve is identical to the distinction between the beautiful and the good. Thus Phaedrus argues that the city purchases her good at the expense of those individuals within it who put themselves in her service. It is at their expense because, as has already been suggested, the beautiful or noble life is really defined by the beautiful or noble death (178d, 179a–b). Love, through the mediating passion of shame, then, instills within the lover a devotion to his beloved (the city) that is self-forgetful and, at the extreme, self-destructive in character—the lover loses himself both figuratively and literally in his admiration for the beloved. It is useful at this point to recall that the lines that Phaedrus quoted from Hesiod in regard to Eros and its primacy (178b) are, in the original, followed immediately by the observation that Eros eliminates mind and prudent counsels from the breasts of gods

and men.[4] Eros eliminates thoughtful concern with one's self and one's own good to such an extent that the one possessed by it pursues a life that has as its end the elimination of that life and the annihilation of the self: the life of the "real man," whom Phaedrus identifies with the erotic man, is a life of mindless self-sacrifice.

Initially Phaedrus' account seems clear. His speech looks like an analysis of the implications of Pericles' famous Funeral Oration wherein he enjoins the citizens to look upon the power and greatness of Athens and become lovers of the city ready to do for her precisely what those who are being interred have done: sacrifice their lives so that the power of the city, and with it their own glory in death, may prove everlasting. Pericles, however, imagines that the glory of Athens is such that no poet is needed to magnify her qualities—her grandeur is manifest with perfect clarity through her deeds alone, both good and evil, and requires no mediating discourse to be displayed.[5] By contrast, Phaedrus, the lover of speeches,[6] insists that it is only through the poet that the beautiful life of the real man, and through him the good of the city, is made possible: the poet, according to Phaedrus, is the founder of political life at its peak in the sense that he provides the conditions of its possibility. Poetry provides the conceits that the city exploits in order to persuade the lover that nothing is more desirable and nothing more beautiful than the beautiful death.

Accordingly, the second part of Phaedrus' speech deals entirely with examples drawn from the poets (179b–180b). The first is taken from Euripides, the third from Homer, and the central example is that of Orpheus, the figure of poetry's self-representation. These three examples are all supposed to bear upon the issue of eros as a cause of the willingness to sacrifice one's life for another. The first, Euripides' Alcestis, allegedly illustrates the admiration the gods feel for those who, like Alcestis, give up their life for the benefit of their beloved (179c–d); the second, Orpheus, the displeasure of the gods with those who refuse to perform this service (179d); and the third, Homer's Achilles, the even greater admiration the gods express for the beloved who gives up his life for the sake of his lover (180b). According to the speeches of the poets, the gods exercise a special providence in regard to the lover or the moral man: they reward his self-sacrifice and punish the self-serving (179c–e, 180b).

It is odd that when turning to the issue of the role of poetry in the coming to be of Eros, Phaedrus chooses to embody the motives and character of the lover as real man in the person of a woman: he takes as his example the self-sacrificing wife of Admetus as portrayed in Euripides' *Alcestis*.[7] His claim that the gods so admired Alcestis for her sacrifice that they sent her soul up from Hades as a reward for her nobility and virtue (179c), however, is not in accord with the denouement of that drama. Phaedrus thus alludes to Euripides' play precisely in order to undercut his superficial claim that

the gods reward the self-sacrificing lover and punish the selfish beloved. In that work, Apollo's primary concern is not for Alcestis, but for Admetus[8] and what motivates Alcestis is not an expectation of divine reward, nor, primarily, a love for her husband, but rather her anticipation of the honor she will receive for having performed this noble sacrifice.[9] Accordingly, the bargain Alcestis makes with her husband is an exchange wherein he receives continued life, but with the addition of shame, and she death, but with honor of the highest sort. Phaedrus, no doubt, understands the former to be, in one sense, perfectly acceptable to the prudent or thoughtful. The latter, however, is acceptable to those whom shame has rendered mindless only upon certain conditions: they must be able, before the fact, on the one hand, to look back upon their own death by projecting a phantom life upon it and, on the other, to look forward to the immortality conferred upon their life by means of that death. They must, in anticipation, become the spectators of their own beautiful death or assume the stance of the admiring gods to whom Phaedrus appeals: Hades as the god of death and the home of the disembodied soul (179c–d) is the precondition for the self-sacrifice of the lover,[10] for the lover is, in effect, an imitator of this god. It is thus through his beautifying or divinizing death that the poet makes possible the beautiful life.[11] That is, he makes possible the transformation of the natural desire for self-preservation into the conventional ambition to achieve "immortality" in speech through the praise and honor that are the conventional guerdon of noble self-sacrifice. It is not, then, the gods, but the poets who, through the invention of these gods, exercise a special providence over human life in both its public and private sphere by laying down the conditions for the lover's belief that he is adequately recompensed for his expenditure.

If, in his discussion of the example of Alcestis, Phaedrus argues that the poets provide the foundation for the possibility of the self-sacrifice of the lover of the beautiful—and thereby for the greatness of the city—in his discussion of the example of Orpheus he shows that, as a consequence, the poets themselves are immune to the charms of the beautiful: free from the spell that his own art has cast, the poet recognizes that there is nothing substantial to be found in the notion of a beautiful death. He must, therefore, be numbered among the thoughtful and prudent or the non-lovers. To the knower or non-lover, however, death is something simply to be avoided: Orpheus "contrived to go to Hades alive" (179d). The poet's "softness" (179d) or his unwillingness to die for another indicates, then, that he has his eyes open and his mind intact. What Phaedrus points to through his claim that Orpheus was punished by the gods through the agency of women (179d–e) is the precarious position that the soft or thoughtful and prudent individual occupies in relation to the multitude, the supporters of moral virtue or the real men who, through the mediation of the example of Alcestis, Phaedrus has identified with the "womanly," that is, the weak minded: the pious and

morally serious.[12] The morally serious, supported as they believe by the gods, are a grave danger to the soft who are in the know. The city may make use of the thoughtless lovers with impunity, but for the individual who does not operate from a comparable position of strength a similar effort to appropriate the good in the face of the overwhelming numbers attachment to the beautiful is fraught with hazard. The shamelessness of Admetus is not a publicly defensible position.[13] The rest of Phaedrus' speech articulates his understanding of how properly to surmount this obstacle standing in the way of the individual's appropriation of the good.

Praising Eros as a great god is his solution to the problem (180b). Phaedrus' theoretical political science, therefore, has as its complement a practical, rhetorical art. In order for the individual knower to pursue the good without being torn to pieces by the lovers of the beautiful he must be willing to praise to the skies that which he holds in utter contempt. Eros, which like salt is valuable only on account of its instrumental utility, must be praised as if it were a precious jewel (177b). As part of this praise, however, the non-lover must be willing to portray himself in the colors of the lover and to suggest that the self-sacrifice of the lover will meet with a reciprocal self-sacrifice on the part of the beloved (179e–180b). This is what Phaedrus works to accomplish at the end of his speech when, despite his firm statement that "only the lover is willing to lay down his life for the sake of another" (179b), he attempts to persuade his audience that Achilles was the beloved of Patroclus and, as such, laid down his life for the sake of his lover (179e–180a). He employs Homer in a similar fashion as he had Euripides: his appeal to the *Iliad* undermines his superficial claims. Homer does not portray the two friends as lovers; Achilles did not lay down his life for Patroclus' sake (the latter was already dead before Achilles sealed his own doom by killing Hector); and, as Phaedrus himself makes clear, Achilles' motive in this regard was not love, but vengeance (179e).

The real thrust of Phaedrus' employment of Achilles as an example is twofold: on the one hand, it is a counterfactual reflection upon what precisely would be required for a non-lover to lay down his life for another—the guarantee that in apparently relinquishing his life he would in reality ensure that he need never lay it down at all (179e, 180b). On the other hand, it is an analysis of the mindlessness of the real man's nature that, under the spell of the phantoms conjured up by shame, the desire for honor, and the poet's art leads him directly to the cancellation of his own existence. In Achilles' case, the irrationality of this tendency is made all the more clear insofar as he gives up his life without the hope that Alcestis has that such a sacrifice will save the life of another—Achilles simply throws good money after bad.

Thus, in the second half of his speech, Phaedrus, through the ambiguities involved in his appeals to the examples he has drawn from the poets, at

once encourages the mindless lover to continue to devote himself body and soul to the beloved—or puts into practice his rhetorical art—and reveals to the thoughtful beloved or non-lover the nature of his own position and the foundations upon which it rests. He demonstrates why the employment of such an art of persuasion is indispensable to the non-lover.[14]

Phaedrus' rhetorical practice appears simply to fulfill what he takes to be the intention of the poet.[15] He, as it were, rechristens the poet's god Hades as his own "big and wonderful god" Eros who, through his possession of the soul of the lover (179a, 180b), lends a divinity both to his life and the death that defines it. He thus makes explicit the *imitatio dei* that was already implicit in the real man's pursuit of the beautiful death. If Phaedrus replaces the poets' Hades with his own Eros, he seems simultaneously to subordinate the latter entirely to the ends of the imperial city. Eros, the son, as it were, of Hades, is to be made the center of a civic religion in the service of the political good. Far from being first among the gods, let alone a first principle of nature, Phaedrus has shown Eros to be a latecomer derivative of the deflection, through the power of poetry, of a natural drive from its natural end toward a conventional end that is directly opposed to it. In making the false claim that Eros is the oldest of the gods, therefore, Phaedrus pretends to effect a religious revolution through which a derivative effect will displace the true cause as "first principle." Theologically speaking, the novel god Eros will usurp the throne of Hades while claiming to have, in fact, always been its rightful occupant.[16] Politically speaking, Phaedrus' reformation will have the effect of grounding the city in a god that at one and the same time represents the moral conduct of the "real man" and makes clear the amoral root of this conduct in nature. The public or political recognition of Eros as a "big and wondrous god" that Phaedrus recommends is, therefore, particularly appropriate to imperial Athens that is distinguished by its desire to make manifest and live in the light of certain principles that were thought to be in accordance with the nature of things and, as such, the true cause of political action even when hidden beneath the veils of convention. Through the god Eros, the realm of Hades is to be flooded with light: the truth about the political good will be revealed and freedom and empire pursued with open eyes. The political good of freedom and empire, however, cannot be identical to the good that is the source for the goodness of the life led by the soft non-lover. This must be an individual, not a collective good.

One of the great peculiarities of Phaedrus' speech is that, though he clearly distinguishes between the good and the beautiful, and implicitly distinguishes the political or public good from the individual and private good, he seems to have nothing definite to say about the character of the latter. Indeed, Phaedrus' revelation of the truth concerning the nature of public or political life through the promotion of Eros as a public and civic

deity simultaneously serves to conceal the truth about the private or supra-political man and his private good. Nevertheless, two clues are offered in the *Symposium* as to Phaedrus' opinion regarding this nonpolitical good. The first is to be found in his own speech, near its opening, where he suggests that eros implants the shame that should serve as the lovers' guide more effectively than either kinship, honors, or wealth (178c). Wealth, of course, appears anomalously on the list: it is conceivable that certain family connections and the desire for honor would instill a sense of shame in the soul; wealth, however, does not seem capable of serving a similar function.[17] Moreover, during the course of his speech, Phaedrus submits both the usefulness of family connections and that of the desire for honor to dissolving analyses. No comparable treatment of wealth is offered—it is simply never mentioned again. By bringing up wealth as a virtual non sequitur in his slide from the good to the beautiful life, Phaedrus appears to suggest, *soto voce*, that wealth might be the primary concern of the non-lover in his pursuit of the good. If this were so, then, just as the self-sacrifice of the lover of the beautiful is employed by the city as a means to the political good, so the city, in turn, would serve as a means to the end of the private profit of the individual non-lover.[18] Phaedrus appears, therefore, to be a gold digger on the grand scale.[19]

The second clue that we are offered in the *Symposium* in regard to Phaedrus' understanding of the good, however, compels us to reconsider precisely what he may mean by wealth. When he proposes the series of speeches on Eros in Phaedrus' name, Eryximachas suggests that, if his proposal is accepted, they will be making "comradely loan" to Phaedrus (177c). Later in the dialogue, when Phaedrus himself cuts short the exchange between Socrates and Agathon in order to allow for the speeches in praise of the god to proceed, he speaks of these offerings as constituting the "repayment" of a debt (194d). Real wealth, in Phaedrus' mind, is to be found not in the accumulation of cash, but the collection of speeches.[20] Both the moral virtue and the amoral power and greatness of the city serve, then, to construct a platform upon which the individual who is sufficiently prudent and thoughtful may operate in the pursuit of his own good: seeking the speeches. The material wealth of the imperial city, therefore, is merely instrumental to this accumulation of intellectual capital. Phaedrus is, it would seem, a hypertrophic Athenian who sees the end of life in nothing other than the exchange of speeches.[21]

Phaedrus has argued that Eros is the result of the transformation, through the poets' art, of a natural conatus for self-preservation into a conventional shame before our nature and an unnatural ambition for posthumous honor. It is this shame and ambition that "take away the mind" from the lovers who are infused with their "god." Such shame and ambition, however, have as their precondition being under the gaze of the "beloved." In the

first half of his speech this gaze is attributed to the city, in the second half to the admiring gods. Phaedrus moves, therefore, from a narrowly political to a "theologico-political" analysis of Eros and in so doing deepens it: he shows the god Hades and his effects to be at the core of the city. Phaedrus' promotion of the god Eros at the expense of Hades, however, is the means, on the one had, to reveal the mechanisms at the root of moral virtue, and, on the other hand, to conceal the distinction that Phaedrus has made between the lover and his pursuit of the beautiful and the beloved and his pursuit of the good. Phaedrus' account of the beloved as ostensibly worshipping divine Eros in the person of the lover (180b)—and through such piety winning the supreme approval of the observing and admiring gods—is meant rhetorically to obscure the stark contrast between the prudent self-interest of the beloved and the mindless self-sacrifice of the lover.

At the close of his speech, Phaedrus makes a rhetorical appeal that is the reverse of that which Socrates makes to Phaedrus at the end of his Palinode in the *Phaedrus*, according to which the lover's capture of the beautiful beloved has as its precondition his revering him as the living exemplar of the god (180b).[22] Since, however, Phaedrus' understanding of the beloved as prudent is incompatible in his mind with the beloved's indulgence in piety, the truth of his inversion of Socrates' account is the attribution of mind and self-awareness to the beloved and ignorance and mindlessness to the lover. He thereby separates mind from eros and associates it with the direct pursuit of the good and a correlative lack of concern for the beautiful. It would seem then that if Socrates is to defend his knowledge of erotics in the face of Phaedrus' account, he will have to show how the love of the beautiful can be made compatible with or essential to mind and self-knowledge. In the *Phaedrus*, at any rate, the beautiful (in the person of the beloved) is a means employed by the lover in his ascent to the hyperuranian beings and also that one of the hyperuranian beings that "shines out most brightly" for mortals—the beautiful itself.[23] In other words, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates links the beautiful to mind as an object of cognition that lies beyond or above the cosmos or the heavens: asking how the beautiful, along with moderation and justice, could, as objects of cognition, lie beyond the heavens seems to be equivalent to asking how the problem of the human things could transcend the problem of the order of the cosmos as that problem is ordinarily understood. One could begin to answer this question if one could show that the human things are not reducible to or derivative of cosmological first principles. Phaedrus seems to believe that they are insofar as he attempts to offer an account of eros as derivative of a fundamental conatus that, at its most comprehensive, could be attributed to living and nonliving beings alike: he roots the city and its morality in the desire for self-preservation (albeit as fundamentally transformed by the poets) and argues that the city may be directed to the life that is best according to nature as its final end (albeit

only through the deceptive conceits of rhetoric). By making the poet Hesiod's account of the divinity of Eros the starting point of his speeches—that is, the promotion of Eros as a "great a wonderful god"—Phaedrus attempts to employ a rhetoric that supercedes while including the poets' art in order both to show the ground of the city in nature and direct the city toward nature as its end. If Plato is to defend Socrates' knowledge of erotics in the face of Phaedrus' assumptions, therefore, the speeches that follow will not only have to show how the love of the beautiful is essentially related to mind, but why Phaedrus' naturalistic account of the political things is untenable, that is, why the city can neither be grounded nor find its telos in "nature" in the way the Phaedrus assumes. The latter will require an explanation of how eros is distinct from the political passion with which Phaedrus identifies it and why, therefore, eros may be understood as not simply instrumentally useful, but good in and of itself.

The untenability of Phaedrus' naturalistic account of the human things, however, requires neither the speeches that follow nor Socrates' response to reveal its defects—the incompatibility between the foundation or first principle of that account and its complete articulation is made clear within that account itself. For Phaedrus cannot keep together what the foundation of his account—namely, becoming as a cosmological principle—must join if it is to remain intelligible: coming-to-be and perishing. In Phaedrus' understanding of eros as the willingness to unthinkingly sacrifice oneself for the sake of the beloved, the natural conatus for preservation is linked only by artificial and conventional means to the conventional willingness to lay down one's life. Phaedrus' account of eros understands coming-to-be and continuance to be linked with ceasing-to-be and death only through art, whereas according to the first principle of that account (becoming) they must somehow be linked by nature.

If Phaedrus' understanding of eros were correct, however, and there were no natural jointure of eros and death, then the unity not only of Parmenides becoming, but of Socrates' *dialegesthai*—which he describes as equally erotics and the practice of dying and being dead—would dissolve. Phaedrus' speech appears to show that neither pre-Socratic nor Socratic philosophy can survive the splitting apart of eros and dying and being dead.[24]

THREE

PAUSANIAS: NOBLE LIES AND THE FULFILLMENT OF GREEKNESS

On the one hand, Pausanias' and Eryximachus' speeches represent continuations of Phaedrus' speech insofar as both prove to be radicalizations of Phaedrus' position, the latter of his attempt to ground political life in first principles of nature and the former of his attempt to direct the city to the life according to nature—the life of the knower—as its end. Their double failure thus demonstrates the impossibility of the completion of Athenian enlightenment or the naturalization of the city. On the other hand, Pausanias' and Eryximachus' speeches both presuppose a repudiation of Phaedrus' fundamental insight into the distinction between the beautiful and the good. The necessity of this repudiation is made clear when we recognize, on the one hand, that Pausanias' and Eryximachus' speeches represent the city in its fundamental aspects—law and art (*techne*)—and, on the other hand, that the city always tends to annul the distinction between the beautiful and the good: the law identifies the noble life or the life of moral virtue with the happy life or the good life and the utilitarian character of the arts reduces the noble to a means to the realization of the good of the body. As a consequence of his version of the identification of the beautiful and the good, Pausanias is forced to attempt to collapse the difference between the political and the suprapolitical that Phaedrus has opened up and, therefore, to attempt not only to complete the reduction of Eros to the status of civic deity, but to bring both pederasty and philosophy within the horizon of the law (184c–d).

Pausanias' rejection of the division between the beautiful and the good, therefore, can only create a new division that is the immediate effect of the legalization of this god. Pausanias insists that all things are in and of themselves neutral in character and gain a distinction in regard to the

noble and the base only through the application of the measure of the law (182a).

Accordingly, he claims that Eros is not one, but two—base and noble—and that Phaedrus' command to eulogize Eros cannot be obeyed without qualification (180c–181a). Pausanias relates the difference between the two Erotes to a similar difference between the two Aphrodites with whom, he claims, each is associated (180d). The beautiful Aphrodite is the elder of the two and sprang into being without the aid of a maternal cause: she is, as it were, the daughter of Uranos and, as a consequence, is given the name "Uranian"; whereas the base and younger does have a mother—she is the daughter of Zeus and Dione—and is properly styled "Pandemian" or "pertaining to all the people" (180d–e).[1] The beautiful goddess of the poets becomes the paradigm for the distinction that the law decrees between the noble or beautiful and the ugly or base. In effect, Pausanias replaces Zeus with Aphrodite as the god of the law and the chief figure of civic piety. At the same time, he attempts to replace the distinction between the just and the unjust with that of the beautiful and the ugly as the fundamental distinction of the law, that is, he attempts to beautify or ennoble the law. Pausanias' speech then gives an account not of law in general, but of the laws of Athens in particular that acknowledge and accommodate the beautiful and its pursuit in an unprecedented fashion.

The first consequence of such an ennobling is, it would seem, the virtual elimination of punishment as a legal issue. Pausanias appeals over and over to the law, but he imagines a political situation in which obedience to the law is wholly voluntary and without any aspect of violence or compulsion—"willing slavery" is the phrase he invents to describe this state of affairs (184c). In this he resembles his beloved Agathon. Yet Pausanias' abstraction from violence or compulsion is not as thoroughgoing as that of Agathon and his very appeal to and celebration of Uranian Aphrodite indicates this fact: according to Hesiod, her "birth" is the result of what Kronos takes to be the just punishment of his own unjust father.[2] Moreover, when he addresses the case of the Pandemian lovers, the issues of justice and compulsion creep back into his argument (181e–182a): the Pandemian or demotic lover must be kept in line with the threat of punishment. Finally, it seems to be, in part, Pausanias' own fear of the possible punishment that the law might mete out for the exercise of his own peculiar sexual preference that lies behind the entire speech as a motive (183c–d). If, however, as Pausanias himself will implicitly claim, compulsion and punishment are issues for the law only as it relates to the lovers who are inspired by the Pandemian brand of Eros, then the fact that the Uranian Aphrodite owes her origin to an act of excessively brutal punishment must give us pause. Pausanias seems at one and the same time to distinguish and identify the two Aphrodite's and their associated Erotes.

That this is indeed the general tendency of his speech is made clear by two remarks that follow immediately upon his differentiating the Pandemian from the Uranian gods. First, in flat contradiction to the original premise of his speech that only one of the two incarnations of Eros is the proper subject of praise, he insists that "all gods must be praised" (180e). He then goes on to declare the true starting point of his speech, namely, that no action is, in and of itself, beautiful or ugly (181a). As we have already remarked, according to Pausanias' view, any action considered in itself is absolutely neutral in character: there is nothing beautiful itself or as such. An action becomes so and is praised or blamed as such, only according to the manner in which it is performed, if nobly and correctly, it is beautiful, if incorrectly, ugly. What determines whether an action is performed correctly or incorrectly, however, is the law (182a). The beautiful or noble is the effect of a lawful stipulation or command. Lawful action is beautiful; unlawful action is ugly. If the beautiful goddess Aphrodite, however, is simply the personification and divinization of the sexual act and the pleasures and desires surrounding it (*ta aphrodisia*),[3] then the "goddess" would, in and of herself, be one. She would be two only according to law.[4] What is true of Aphrodite, according to Pausanias, follows as well for Eros as the personification of love or loving (180d). But what is true for Aphrodite seems to be a contradiction in terms: she is both one and two and all gods must be praised—both Uranian and Pandemian—and yet only the Uranian ought to be praised (180e–181a). The external measure of the law operates to divide and discriminate between high and low or the beautiful and the ugly without in fact altering in the least the essential unity and neutrality of the phenomenon to which it is applied.

Pausanias' appeal to the two Aphrodites ultimately exercises most of its force in providing an argument in favor of his own misogynist, homoerotic preference. The Eros that accompanies Pandemian Aphrodite, that Eros that "worthless human beings" (*phauloi*) take as their own (181b), he defines by three distinguishing traits. First, it is a love as much for women as for boys. Second, it is a love of body rather than soul. And, third, it is a love of the stupidest for it has an eye only to the sex act without being concerned as to whether it is beautiful or ugly (181b). One expects Pausanias to turn right around and distinguish the Uranian Eros from the Pandemian along the lines of these three points. He makes a feint in this direction, but the parallel breaks down with the second step (181c–d). After suggesting that, just as the Uranian Aphrodite has no portion in the female, so the Uranian Eros associated with her is a love exclusively of boys, he fails to add that it is love primarily of soul, rather than body—that is, not concerned primarily with "the act"—and love for the most intelligent boys. Instead he simply claims that this Eros, like the Uranian Aphrodite, is elder and, therefore, has no part in outrage (*hubris*). That Uranian Eros does not partake of outrage, however,

cannot follow from its association with the Aphrodite who owes her genesis to a son's castration of his father. Pausanias is in the midst of making a case for the lawful superiority of a form of Eros that he himself, seemingly without being aware of it, associates with the most violently antinomian of acts: parricide. In the end, Pausanias trails off without even attempting to compare the two on the third point and instead makes a rambling appeal to the universal superiority in intelligence of male over female and to the choice-worthiness of boys at that time of life when their thoughtfulness comes to fruition, namely, late adolescence "when the beard first appears" (181d), as if one were not familiar with any number of perfectly idiotic adolescent boys.

If Pausanias had followed through on his comparison and given his approval to a lover of the most intelligent of youths whose primary concern is with their souls rather than their bodies, he would have described Socrates and his peculiar eroticism.[5] In other words, he would have hit upon a form of eros that is indeed distinct in its practices from that of "all the people." As it is, however, he has simply beautified his own sexual taste which, it seems, happens to be for boys with fresh beards. In any case, it is "the act" that is the final end of both the Uranian and the Pandemian Eros. It is Pausanias' intention, then, to show that his sexual congress with such youths is not something base or ugly, but noble according to the measure of the law: as long as sex with newly bearded boys is performed in an "orderly and lawful way," it is beautiful (182a). The thrust of his argument, therefore, is directed toward the complete legalization of pederasty of his own particular variety: boy-love that stops short of the molestation of children. Pausanias' speech continuously hovers round a discovery of Socratic eros, but must always miss this mark; for the distinction between Socrates "pederasty" and ordinary, "pandemian" pederasty cannot be made within the horizon of the law and while assuming the identity of the beautiful and the good.[6] Within the horizon of the law body, must take priority to soul[7] and eros, therefore, be understood exclusively in sexual terms. As long as the beautiful or noble is identified with the good, the translegal good that is the primary concern of Socratic eros must remain elusive.

Thus far, Pausanias' argument has reproduced the tendency of the law to insist that it is the sole source of the distinctions it articulates and that these distinctions are the only real distinctions, that is, that it is the "invention (*exeuresis*) of what is."[8] In proclaiming itself to be the highest standard or the measure of all measures, the law must also insist that apart from its measurements and the divisions it lays down, the essentially neutral character of things prevails and there are no class-kind distinctions that have their ground not in the law, but the nature of things. The law commands and in commanding brings into being.

Pausanias, however, is in an awkward position: on the one had, he wishes to follow the law's lead in insisting that it is the measure of measures.

On the other hand, he wishes to lead the law in what appears to be a new direction: he is a reformer. Indeed, the transformation he intends to effect turns out to be of a very radical character. Since the real point of distinction between the Pandemian Eros he condemns as base and the Uranian Eros he praises as noble boils down to nothing more than that between sex with women and sex with boys (181d–e), Pausanias' reform amounts to a revolution in regard to the city's assessment of the relative merits of heterosexual and homosexual eros. He tries to cover up this fact by pretending that the issue is distinguishing a noble from a base love of boys, but tips his hand when he mentions the law against loving freeborn matrons (181e–182a), that is, the prohibitions against adultery and in support of marriage. It is in discussing the lovers of pre-adolescent boys and the laws surrounding marriage that the issues of compulsion and, therefore, punishment slip into his speech for the first time (181e). Pausanias rightly links the discrimination of the just and the unjust that the law makes (182a) and the compulsion it exercises in order to give this discrimination force to the issue of heterosexual eros, marriage, and the family. For it is not the "nobility" of marriage and family life that the law acknowledges in lending legitimacy to the union of man and woman, but rather the necessity of the family as a basis for the city and the consequent political necessity of proclaiming unjust and laying down punitive sanctions against any form of eros that runs counter to the family and acts to dissolve it. Pausanias' proposal, then, to replace the distinction between the just and the unjust with that between the beautiful and the ugly as the primary distinction of the law, is a proposal to turn the city on its head in regard to erotic matters: heterosexual conjugal union will no longer receive the law's stamp of approval, but will be rendered "unlawful" in the weak sense—that is, shameful (181b)—and pederasty, which, in Athens, currently exists in a legal no-man's-land somewhere between outright prohibition and grudging acceptance (182d–183d), will be held up as the model of lawful conduct (184d–e). That such a legal reform is both feasible and legitimate Pausanias will attempt to demonstrate by an appeal to the allegedly public-spirited character of homosexuality as opposed to the essentially private character of heterosexual love.

Thus, Pausanias' intention to "beautify" the law, or to fuse it with the beauty of Aphrodite, compels him to cover over the law's foundation in low natural necessity, a necessity detectable not in the beautiful or noble, but in the just. For as long as the law is considered in the light of the just, it may be seen to possess within itself an obstacle to its own "wish" to be the invention of what is: nature, not the city, is, in the form of sexual eros, the cause of the coming to be of the human beings the city wishes to fashion into citizens. Pausanias, then, attempts to suppress the justice of the law in order to "liberate" it from a necessity that runs counter to his own desires. That is, his attempt to purify the law of the justice of the gods and blend it

exclusively with their beauty is in the service of an attempt to let his Eros go naked in public glowing with an artificial beauty borrowed from his lawful Aphrodite. Athens' law can make pederasty beautiful then only through an appeal to the goddess whose beauty—despite Pausanias' claims to the contrary—is in fact borrowed from something that has nothing to do with law and its discriminations: the naked human form. Precisely the beauty the law declares it ugly or shameful to expose, Pausanias makes wholly public in an attempt to beautify the law. Only through the incorporation of the translegally beautiful into the law can Pausanias beautify his Eros.

Pausanias then is on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, in an effort to demonstrate that there is nothing intrinsically ugly or shameful about his pederastic desires, he has appealed to the law's tendency to supersede nature and its necessities in the invention of what is or in the stipulative character of its commands. On the other hand, in an effort to demonstrate that there is something intrinsically beautiful or noble about his pederastic desires, he appeals to the Athenian tendency to trace the distinction between the noble and the base articulated in the law back to what is beautiful or ugly in truth or according to nature, a tendency most obviously manifest in Athens having given legal sanction to the public display of the naked human form. In this, however, Athens merely pushes to a certain extreme a tendency present in law as such, which declares itself to be not only supremely authoritative, but fundamentally true. Law wishes not simply to be the invention, but the "discovery (*exeuresis*) of what is."[9] Pausanias' lawful Aphrodite and Eros are the incarnation of these incoherent tendencies within the law. His speech articulates this incoherence: its first half (180c–182a) stresses invention or arbitrary command and the laws putative independence from nature and the second half (182a–185c) discovery or truth and the laws appeal to nature. The second half, therefore, leaves behind the discussion of law in general and turns to a discussion of the many contradictory laws of the Greeks and especially the laws of Athens.

Pausanias now proposes to inspect the variety of Greek laws in order to determine which is most beautiful or noble in regard to the matter at hand—the legal status of pederasty. If he is to evaluate the respective merits of a variety of laws, however, he must appeal, of course, to a standard that lies beyond the scope of the law. This translegal standard turns out to be "Greekness" or Greek civilization that Pausanias understands to embody what is beautiful or noble according to nature: the capacity and liberty of speech and the practices of naked athletics, pederasty, and philosophy (182b–c). What is beautiful according to nature is the revelation of nature in both deed and speech. Pausanias has gone from suppressing the "ugly" and low necessity and nature that lies at the ground of the law, to appealing to a "beautiful" and noble nature that he takes to be the final end of the law. He will beautify pederasty by abstracting from its tension with the low, ugly

foundation of the law and associating it with what he understands to be the full flowering of human nature that the law makes possible.

Once the standard of Greekness is applied to the variety of laws, Sparta and all other Greek regimes are shown to fall short and only Athens' emerges as truly exemplary (182d). Pausanias first distinguishes between three sorts of Greek regimes. There are those in which pederasty is completely lawful (182b), those in which it is simply forbidden (182b–c), and finally Athens and Sparta where the law is ambiguous in regard to the matter (182a). In those regimes in which pederasty has been made entirely lawful, the cause is to be found in the incapacity of their citizens for articulate and persuasive speech: tongue-tied lovers forming a legislative majority have removed all obstacles in the way of the gratification of their desires. But in the matter of speaking, only the Athenians prove superior to these inarticulate regimes (182d): no more than the Elisians or the Boeotians, can the taciturn Spartans count upon a glib tongue to usher their boys into a lover's bed. It is only in Athens, then, that the Greek traits of skillful discourse and freedom of speech combine with naked youths and pederastic desire (184c–d). In those Greek regimes furthest from Athens, the Ionian cities ruled over by the barbarians, all of the most distinctive attributes of Greekness—naked athletics, philosophy, and pederasty—are recognized as threats to the tyrannical character of the regime and, consequently, forbidden (182b–c). But here as well, it would seem, only the Athenians serve as a strict counterparadigm: in Athens alone is the ostensibly antityrannical character of homosexual pederasty given official recognition insofar as the Athenians believe that their democratic laws owe their origin to the lovers Harmodius and Aristogeiton who are said to have toppled the tyranny of the Pesistratids (182c). It is only in Athens, then, that pederasty is thought to be essentially linked to a democratic regime that allows for and encourages complete freedom in regard to speech. Here alone is man's erotic nature assumed to be wedded to his rational nature through the mediation of the law. Of all Greek cities only Athens is truly Greek.

Democratic Athens claim that eros of this sort is at the origin of her laws has no precedent and has found no imitator. Only in Athens, therefore, is it possible for Pausanias to argue that a full legalization of pederastic eros is simply a realization of the original intention of the law. That is, Pausanias believes that in Athens one may argue for a reform in the law by an appeal to Greekness without at the same time being compelled to appeal to something simply beyond the injunctions of the law; for the law of Athens has, from its inception, commanded the full realization of Greekness. Other regimes suppress and tyrannize human nature through their laws. Only the laws of Athens genuinely attempt to embrace within their measure and enjoin through their commands human nature at its peak or that which is beautiful according to nature. Only in Athens are the seemingly contradictory

tendencies of the law—its wish to be both the discovery and the invention of what is—reconciled through the recognition that what is by nature is not the low, the necessary, and the private (e.g., heterosexual desire and the family), but the highest, noblest, freest, and most public-spirited concerns of man (e.g., homosexual pederasty and political freedom).

This reconciliation, therefore, depends upon the claim, shared not only by Phaedrus and Pausanias, but, as we will see, by Aristophanes as well (192a–b), that homosexual pederasty is "manly" not simply in the sense of being an attraction to the masculine, but in the sense of being public-spirited and "democratic." That this is indeed the character of homosexual pederasty and that this fact was displayed in Harmodius and Aristogeiton as the founders of democratic Athens is, according to Plato's Socrates, simply false. By Socrates' account as he presents it in the *Hipparchus*, the lovers attacked the tyrant on the basis of a purely private quarrel. This quarrel was grounded in the jealousy of Aristogeiton that had been provoked by the tyrant's erotic interest in his beloved, Harmodius.[10] Given the concealed antinomian character of pederasty and its close association not with democratic public-spiritedness, but a tyrant and a private dispute, one is compelled to entertain the suggestion that at the core of homosexual pederasty as Pausanias understands it is not democracy and law, but tyranny.[11]

That democratic Athens had its origin in homosexual pederastic eros is, therefore, a political "myth" and Greekness or Greek civilization as represented in its paradigmatic form by Athens has as its basis a "noble lie." It was in part the recognition by the Athenians of this lie as a lie that precipitated the destruction of democratic Athens and her empire.[12] This recognition was forced upon the Athenians on the eve of the Sicilian Expedition when they perceived that their passionate attraction to Alcibiades was the fulfillment of the ostensibly public-spirited character of pederastic eros, but that Alcibiades' outsized capacity would not only make possible the fulfillment of their wildest hopes by providing their city with universal empire, but make necessary the realization of their deepest fear by reducing their democratic polity to a private holding managed by a single man. They were forced to recognize Alcibiades as both the beloved of the city and the tyrant in their midst.

Long before Alcibiades and his Sicilian expedition, however, the antinomian and implicitly tyrannical character of pederastic eros seems to have been dimly recognized within Athens, for even in the city where pederasty is given public honor insofar as it is associated with the founding of the regime, it is far from meeting with unalloyed approval. One assumes that the ambiguous status of pederasty in the Athenian regime—on the one hand, lovers are given encouragement and it is denied that the "willing enslavement" they suffer and the deceptions and breaking of oaths they practice in attempting to capture the beloved are shameful (182d–183c), while, on

the other, any beloved who is seen to gratify his lover is considered shameless and worthy of contempt (182d–183d)—is most obviously attributable to the fact that a large number of Athenians are, at one and the same time, pederastic lovers and fathers of sons (183c). That is, the ambiguous attitude of the Athenians toward pederasty is simply a reflection of the essential tension that Pausanias wishes to suppress between the family and all that is required to maintain it and the madness of erotic longing. The Athenians divine that the tyranny of "public-spirited" eros threatens not only to eliminate all public life, but with it the distinction between the public and the private and, therefore, all private life as well. Consequently, one might well conclude that as far as the legalization and beautifying of pederastic sexual desire are concerned, Athens has gone about as far as any democratic regime can go and that Pausanias is already living in the best of all possible worlds as far as his inclinations are concerned.

Pausanias, however, pushes his point rather far beyond the limits of the possible. In doing so he turns away from both the origin and the end of Athenian law and toward the very ambivalence regarding pederasty ingredient within it. He portrays this ambivalence as merely an apparent contradiction within the law, reinterpreting and resolving this contradiction in the light of the ostensible origin of Athens' regime in pederastic eros of the noblest kind. This reinterpretation reveals, he claims, the true intention of the law. Pausanias argues, therefore, that his proposal for legalizing pederasty is simply a more effective way to realize this original intention. The ambivalence of the Athenian law, according to which the lover is encouraged to pursue and the beloved to flee, may be explained, he claims, by its desire to establish a contest (184a). He wishes his remarks to be understood as indicating that the object of this contest is to discriminate the better (Uranian) from the worse (Pandemian) and to join the best with the best when it comes to lover and beloved (184d–e). However, in accordance with what we have observed concerning Pausanias' distinction between Uranian and Pandemian Eros, the erotic contest, in setting up difficulties for the lover in the capture of the beloved, tests for nothing but persistence and, thus, discriminates only between committed homosexual pederasts and rather less single-minded "bisexuals" who will conclude that perseverance is not worth the trouble when they can seek alternative and equally alluring gratifications with wives, courtesans, and flute-girls.

Nonetheless, in building on the apparent meaning of his argument, Pausanias suggests that this erotic contest in regard to "virtue" could be further refined and perfected if the "willing enslavement" of the lover in pursuit of the beloved, to which the law lends its support, could be combined with the only other willing enslavement of which the law wholeheartedly approves, that concerning instruction in virtue (184b–d). His attempt to overcome the tension within the law itself between its justice and its beauty by entirely

suppressing the former ultimately brings to the fore the law's claim to instill virtue in the proper sense, rather than merely produce the appearance of it through shame and the fear of punishment. Pausanias' proposal for reform amounts to this: lover and beloved should come together, each under the direction of their own appropriate laws—the lover will continue to woo his beloved under the old law according to which there is no shame in enslaving himself to or deceiving the beloved, while the beloved will yield to his lover under a novel law according to which it is no shame to gratify and, indeed, it is most beautiful to "willingly enslave" oneself to the lover as long as that lover promises to instruct one in wisdom and the rest of virtue (184d–e). It is easy to see, however, that once the beloved's law combines with that of the lover, the lover need never play the slave again. On the contrary, simply by proffering a more or less persuasive claim to possess the capacity to transmit wisdom and virtue, the lover will find himself instantly and uninhibitedly gratified by a beloved who thinks it beautiful to enslave himself in all ways to any one who can so instruct him. Thus, for the lover, the only statute of the old law that continues to have relevance to his novel situation is that according to which the deception employed in the capture of the beloved is not a matter of reproach (183b), that is, the lover need possess neither wisdom, nor virtue, nor the capacity to transmit them, but only a show of these, in order for his being serviced by the beloved to take on all the beauty of the lawful. Pausanias hopes that, in a complementary fashion, the new law regarding the beloved's gratification of the lover will relieve the beloved of any trepidation in regard to such deception. He need entertain no suspicions regarding a lover's lack of capacity to requite him for his services, for even to be deceived in such a case is beautiful insofar as it reveals the zealous devotion of the beloved to wisdom and virtue (184e–185a). Lover and beloved come together beautifully under the aegis of a beautiful or noble lie.

The conclusion of Pausanias' speech thus shows what the claim of the law to transmit a virtue in the proper sense amounts to. The law's pretension to ennoble the soul through the transmission of virtue is, from the point of view of the law itself, in the service of convincing the young to devote themselves entirely to the service of the city and the bodily goods over which it presides. It is a noble lie. Moreover, it reveals that behind the noble lie of lawful virtue stands the effort of the law to create "willing slaves," that is, that the moral virtue of the citizens (the beauty or nobility of the "beloved") finds its origin in the unreasoning compulsion of the law or the tyranny at the foundation of political life (the ugly intentions of the "lover"). The law instills and demands not understanding, but obedience to its commands. Thus, lawful virtue must find its origin in vice as the law understands it, and for the law as law invention or command must collide with and supersede discovery or truth. The contradictions in the law can never be interpreted away.

Pausanias' motives in offering his speech on eros are clear: he wishes, on the one hand, to make it possible, for the sort of pederast that he himself represents—namely, an educated Athenian lacking either extraordinary wealth or political power, but sophisticated enough to be conversant with the current opinions of the intellectuals regarding wisdom and virtue and how they may be transmitted—to capture the beloved without a chase. He dreams of turning the tables on the beloved and fobbing off on him the "willing slavery" that is at present the lot of the lover. Through the appearance of wisdom, he wishes to himself become the object of love. He is the "hubristic" lover of Socrates' first speech in the *Phaedrus* who hides himself behind the "moderate" speeches of moral virtue and proves to be their inner core.[13] On the other hand, he wishes to convince others, and perhaps primarily himself, that his erotic desires are not simply sordid, but have about them something elevated and refined. That there is no real link between instruction in virtue as he understands it and sexual intercourse and that the beloved, even in trading his favors for such instruction, remains a sort of prostitute, if a noble-minded one, does not appear to have occurred to Pausanias or, if it has, for reasons too obvious to mention, he does not bring it up.

The issues his speech raises, however, reach beyond Pausanias' own concerns insofar as the problem of the relation between the law and pederasty ultimately gives way to that of the relation between the law and philosophy in his speech. Pausanias claims that the novel law he proposes in regard to the beauty of the beloved's willing enslavement to the lover who claims to be a teacher of virtue is identical to a seemingly preexistent Athenian law that he calls "the law regarding philosophy" (184d). According to this claim, the "willing enslavement" of Apollodorus or Aristodemus to Socrates can only meet with unreserved approval from every law-abiding citizen of Athens. This is clearly far from being the case and Pausanias himself admits as much in an earlier portion of his speech wherein he describes philosophy, even in Athens, as subject to the "greatest reproaches" (183a). Thus, in arguing that the complete approval of "noble" pederasty by the Athenian law is simply the full realization of that of which Athens is already the paradigm—namely, Greekness and Greek civilization, and that means, of civilization *tout court*—he is also arguing for the legalization of philosophy on similar grounds. Athens will become Athens in the grandest and truest sense if and only if she makes wholly lawful, and so entirely beautiful, erotic love between older and younger males *and* philosophy. That is, Athens will realize her own essence fully only if she gives lawful recognition and approval to Socrates as the peak of Greekness and the culmination of that tendency which is already implicit in the Athenian approval of freedom of speech, the public display of naked human nature, and the story of the love affair at the source of Athens' democratic regime. What makes Pausanias a

singularly interesting representative of this Athenian tendency is the fact that he recognizes that Greekness in its political fulfillment must be based upon a noble lie.

Not only has he located this noble lie as central to Athens' self-understanding as the pinnacle of Greekness and grasped that this myth traces Athens' law and its wisdom to an origin in pederastic eros, he appears, moreover, to be aware that this renders Athenian law a false image of Socratic philosophy insofar as the latter finds its source in or is identical to Socrates' erotics. And while he notes that this resemblance may be as much a cause of jealousy as accommodation on the part of the city, he also notes the unparalleled toleration that Socrates has so far enjoyed within Athens. With all this in mind, he sets out to bring to complete fulfillment what Athens already promises in her present condition. He does so, however, with the end in view of legitimating his own pederastic inclinations: they will ride into the sunlight of public acceptance on the coattails of Socratic philosophy's fusion with the wisdom of the Athenian law that, as it were, mirrors it. On the theological level, Pausanias argues, this requires the dethroning of the punitive gods of the law and their replacement with the noble Aphrodite and her noble son or the complete politicization of the beautiful gods of the poets. By these means, Pausanias believes, he may reanimate and extend the noble lie at the root of democratic Athens in order to put it in the service of lending the fiction of nobility to the willing enslavement or self-prostitution of the beloved to the lover who pretends to embody the "wisdom and virtue" of philosophy.

In completing the central tendency of Athens' Greekness by pulling down into the city its two transpolitical peaks—the beautiful gods of the poets and Socrates' erotics—the ugliness of Pausanias' extension of Athens' beautiful lie is made apparent. First, the beautiful gods are bestialized. Uranian Eros becomes the personification of homosexual bodily union. That is, Uranian and Pandemian Eros are identified; this identification, as we have seen, results in the infection of the Uranian realm by the irrational compulsion ingredient in the regulation of Pandemian affairs. Speaking theologically, one may say that, within the horizon of the law, the vulgar or Pandemian notion of the gods as punitive must necessarily take precedence over the Uranian beauty of the gods. Second, and on a higher level, Socrates' philosophy is transformed into an instrument of universal tyranny: philosophy is made lawful and thereby reduced to the antinomian. In fine, to fulfill Greekness is to eliminate it. Pausanias' speech then anticipates the decline of Greekness before the fact of Athens fall[14] and locates the necessity of that fall in the impossibility at the heart of Athenian enlightenment—namely, the attempt to render political life wholly compatible with nature in the highest sense or to expel from the law the ugliness at its core.

FOUR

ERYXIMACHUS: SOVEREIGN SCIENCE AND THE SACRED LAW

According to the seating order that Agathon had established for the banquet, Aristophanes was to speak after Pausanias and Eryximachus would follow him in turn. Aristophanes unwittingly disrupts this order with his hiccups[1] so that Eryximachus must speak before him (185c–d). This accidental disruption, however, rearranges the speakers such that, on the one hand, Pausanias and Eryximachus—the two representatives of the city—and, on the other, the comic and the tragic poets are paired. It establishes the proper order of the speeches. Rather than being the offspring of artful design, the proper order is the chance result of a natural disorder.[2] Aristophanes' hiccups and what follows from them thus call our attention in advance to one of the chief difficulties of Eryximachus' speech—he offers a theoretical account of the first principles of the cosmos that seems to deny the ground of the possibility of chance, while simultaneously being forced, when attempting to account for the world of our experience and the mode in which art intervenes within it, to appeal to the operations of chance.

The hiccups of Aristophanes, however, are perhaps not simply a chance phenomenon. Apollodorus is not clear as to precisely what brought on Aristophanes' fit (185c). For all we know, it may have been neither overeating nor overdrinking, but rather an unsuccessful struggle to suppress his laughter throughout the course of Pausanias' account of Eros. Judging from what he says in his own speech, Aristophanes must have found Pausanias' attempt to integrate Eros into the order of the law amusing in the extreme. Certainly it is not Aristophanes' way to refrain from laughter in the face of the genuinely funny (189b). Throughout the two speeches that between them represent the fundamental elements of the city—law and art—Aristophanes keeps up a continual counterpoint of ridiculous and disruptive noises: first laughter and

hiccupping and then the gargling and sneezing that Eryximachus prescribes as a cure for his indisposition. Aristophanes' hiccups, therefore, represent his opposition to the enlightenment positions of Pausanias and Eryximachus: they make evident the fact that he has seen through the pretensions of the city of wisdom. Thus, Aristophanes takes seriously neither Pausanias attempt to beautify the law and the gods of the law nor Eryximachus' more radical venture to replace the law and the punishing gods with the rule of a science grounded in knowledge of the first principles of the cosmos and able to provide human beings with the immortality and the bliss that are conventionally attributed to the gods. Aristophanes will make clear the ground of his opposition in his own speech in which he articulates his understanding of the necessary character of the human things that makes the ambitions of a Pausanias and an Eryximachus inevitable, but at the same time impossible of fulfillment. First, he will show that Eryximachus' ambitions have their ground in the fundamental problem that is the ground of the Oedipal longing that Eryximachus pretends to resolve. Then he will demonstrate that this problem cannot be solved. Still, the fact that Aristophanes insists that it is "just" that Eryximachus speak on "his behalf" while he recovers (185d) seems to indicate that through the just Aristophanes remains essentially linked to the city he finds laughable and whose pretensions he deflates. Aristophanes will prove a very ambiguous figure.

Though Eryximachus' speech is, in this sense, a continuation and completion of Pausanias' speech, it is, nonetheless, based upon a rejection of his understanding of what is fundamental to political life: not law but art or *techne* is the deepest ground of the city.[3] Eryximachus draws this conclusion, however, on the basis of what was implicit in Pausanias' own speech, since Pausanias, despite himself, made clear that the pretension of the law to provide for virtue of the soul is simply instrumental to its true aim, the gratification of the body (184e). For, if bodily gratification is the end of the city, and if, as Eryximachus assumes, soul can be reduced to body, then law and its pretensions may simply be dispensed with in favor of the rule of that which is truly competent to minister to and overcome the defects of body: science and art. Eryximachus' speech as a whole, then, advocates the displacement of the rule of law by the rule of science. He recognizes, however, that if law is to be overcome, it must be confronted on the deepest level, a level to which Pausanias did not descend: sacred law (*themis*). The replacement of sacred law by the medical art is the goal of Eryximachus' speech (188d).

Eryximachus understands his completion of Pausanias' speech to be the completion of the logos itself (186a). He will give the final account in regard to Eros and all things. The implications of his pretension are clear: he believes that the speeches of the poets and the philosopher will

be rendered superfluous once he has offered his own scientific understanding—neither Aristophanes nor Socrates, let alone Agathon, can make a genuine claim to knowledge of Eros. In the case of Socrates, however, this means that Eryximachus implicitly denies the truth of Socrates' claim to possess knowledge of an "art of eros" (177d–e). He wishes in advance, then, to dispense with Socrates' erotics in favor of his own. As we will see, this ambition necessarily entails an attempt to replace Socrates' art of conversation (*dialegesthai*) and turn to the human things—or his examination of the speeches as a means to the understanding of the truth of the beings[4]—with an account of nature and its first principles in terms of a "transhuman" logos of science grounded in the "pure" discourse of mathematics. Unlike Pausanias, who represents the attempt of the city to incorporate philosophy within the horizon of the law (184d), Eryximachus' speech embodies the city of art's ambition to eliminate not only the pseudowisdom of the law, but the lack of wisdom of philosophy in the name of the rule of scientific or technical wisdom. It represents an attempt to solve the human problem in a final manner. If Eryximachus' version of enlightenment is implicit in the Athenian enlightenment or Greekness, he quickly leaves Greekness as such behind and points forward to the most strident versions of modernity.

After endorsing Pausanias' appeal to a double Eros, Eryximachus insists that Eros rules not only soul in regard to the beautiful, as Pausanias had claimed, but, moreover, animal body, plants and "all the beings" (186a). This is the last time in his speech that Eryximachus mentions soul. "All the beings" means for him all the bodily beings.[5] He says he has learned about this from his art of medicine and proclaims the god to be "great and wondrous" on account of the comprehensiveness of his "reach," which extends over both the human and the divine (186a–b).[6] It comes as no surprise that Eryximachus translates Pausanias' account of the doubleness of Eros into bodily terms: he reduces the distinction between the beautiful and the ugly Eros that Pausanias had attempted to establish through the agency of the law to the difference between healthy and sick body. Healthy and sick bodies differ, however, insofar as they love and desire different and dissimilar things: the healthy desires good things, the sick bad. Eryximachus, therefore, reduces the beautiful to the bodily good. He initially appeals, however, not to nature, but to mere agreements among human beings as a basis to distinguish between the healthy and the sick or the good and the bad. It would seem then that, strictly speaking, no such distinction exists by nature. Sick body and its desire for the bad is every bit as natural as a healthy body and its desire for the good.[7]

Eryximachus defines the art of medicine as the knowledge or science of erotics of the body in regard to repletion and evacuation. He goes on to divide this science into two subsidiary sciences: a theoretical diagnostics and a practical art of therapeutics that actually induces changes in the body

in regard to the two forms of Eros (186c–d). The theoretical science is a science of discrimination. We presume that one of the chief discriminations this science makes is between the good and bad or healthy and sick Erotes. If it is science that discriminates between the healthy and the sick, however, either this division must be based upon something more substantial than agreements among men (i.e., the merely human perspective that science in its comprehensive theoretical view presumably transcends) or theoretical diagnostics is essentially subordinate to practical concerns and the human point of view that supports them. Be that as it may, the practical branch of the science of medicine appears to be embodied in two separate capacities (186d). These two, however, are in fact one when properly understood: to replace one Eros (sick) with the other (healthy) is precisely to instill love where there is none, but there ought to be and to remove it where it is but ought not to be. This becomes clear in the passage that immediately follows wherein Eryximachus provides an account of the theoretical principles in the light of which his practical science operates.

The "good demiourgos" in the art of medicine is able to make those things that are by nature at enmity in the body friends by instilling love between them. But what is most at enmity, according to Eryximachus, are certain contraries that form the elemental principles of compound bodies and whose co-presence in a mixture defines what it means to be such a body. These contraries are the hot and the cold, the sweet and the bitter, the dry and the moist, and the like. It thus appears to be the case that, in Eryximachus view, strife between the contraries is by nature and love the result only of the therapy of the medical art. One is, then, initially at a loss as to how to understand his appeal to a double Eros in the light of his account of the first principles of bodily being. This initial difficulty is resolved as soon as one sees that the natural strife between contraries is simply the result of a natural Eros of the similar for the similar: it is the Eros of, for example, the hot for the hot, or the natural attraction of like for like that is the ground for the strife between the hot and the cold or the natural repulsion between contraries.[8] The division between the two Erotes that the theoretical branch of medicine cognizes is rooted in the primary division between the material elements of nature: sick Eros is an expression of the division between opposing contraries and healthy Eros the result of the practical branch of the medical art operating on nature in such a way as to replace the attraction of like for like with an attraction of contrary for contrary so that the elements of a compound body, rather than rejecting the mixture with their opposites within the compound, instead maintain it. Eryximachus denies that there is a natural conatus for self-preservation in every compound body. On the contrary, by nature the compound body tends toward dissolution. From the human point of view, that is, from the point of view of ourselves as compound bodies who wish to maintain our

own existence as such, our nature, indeed nature in its fundamental aspect, is not simply neutral to the distinction between the healthy and the sick; it is itself sick or bad and only the art of medicine can provide us with a health or a good that is contrary to nature. The good is not operative as a principle in nature. Eryximachus' account of nature dispenses with any notion of final cause: it is non or antiteleological.

The medical science in its theoretical or diagnostic aspect, Eryximachus wishes to claim, reflects not only on the nature of nature, but on the character of its own doings and discriminates between them: what human beings agree among themselves to call "sick" and "bad" science calls "natural" and what human beings call "healthy" and "good" science calls "artful." It is what he takes to be the self-reflective character of his own science that gives Eryximachus warrant to attribute comprehensive wisdom to it—it is a science of nature, a science of science, and a science of the relation between the two. The difference between the two Erotes that Eryximachus' science of science picks out, then, is, in the last analysis, a difference "by agreement" only insofar as it perceives that the agreement between contraries that constitutes the second form of Eros is the work of science itself as distinct from nature. As we will see, in Eryximachus' view, only the latter, medical Eros is rational as it alone establishes a constant or permanent ratio between the elements of nature as they are found within the compound. Nature itself is in this sense perfectly irrational: it does not work to maintain the ratios between heterogeneous elements within a compound that, according to their fundamental tendency, bear no relationship to one another. Whatever the case may be with medical Eros, natural Eros could hardly be described as a god: it is simply an irrational force of attraction and repulsion. Eryximachus then understands the divine to be not a being, but a natural principle and as such to be mindless and nonprovidential.

Eryximachus' account of Eros is based upon a cosmology that one might roughly characterize as "pre-Socratic." The majority of commentators understand this cosmology to be rooted in a version of Empedocles' doctrine according to which the alternation of strife and love is the cause of the coming to be and perishing of all things. Now though it is true that at certain points Eryximachus appears to echo this Empedoclian teaching (186b, 187e–188a), such statements prove to be merely provisional. At his most radical—and in the interests of, as he puts it, the veneration of his art (186b)—he wishes to attribute exclusively to art the power of instilling a love between, rather than an accidental, ephemeral, and ultimately unnatural concatenation of, opposites. This intention is made most clear in his treatment of music when he suggests that art alone can bring harmony between otherwise incompatible, contrary elements, for example, the high and the low (187b–c). But it is precisely in the context of making such a claim that he assimilates the art of medicine to the model of the art of music (187c).

The fundamental and unstated presumption operative at the root of Eryximachus' account, therefore, is not an Empedoclian, but a Hippian doctrine, namely, the view that the totality of "all the beings" is made up of certain primary beings that are, in their fundamental nature, perfectly discrete or separate: nature as such tends to produce, or reproduce, a situation in which great and homogeneous bodies stand apart and unrelated to one another.[9] Nature necessarily tends toward a state of entropy. How these essentially discrete and discontinuous beings have ended up parceled out into smaller quantities and how they have combined to form the sums and ratios that mixed or compound bodies represent, that is, how they have become related to one another, is, consequently, a mystery for which Eryximachus cannot account.[10] He would seem to be compelled to ascribe this mixture to chance,[11] but there does not seem to be any room for this sort of contingency in the nature of things given his account of the first principles. Where art finds room to operate, then, is equally unclear. The theoretical principles that art cognizes are completely opposed to the chance state of affairs that it seeks to maintain through its practical operations. Eryximachus' cosmology, therefore, is lopsided: it cannot account for how the cosmos has come to be, but only how it will of necessity at some point cease to be in giving way to a state of universal dissociation. To complete his cosmological account, Eryximachus would seem to require, though he does not appeal to, a divine demiourgos after the manner of Timaeus or a divine mind after the manner of Anaxagoras.[12] He wants to attribute mind and order exclusively to art and deprive nature of both. But that very intention pushes him in the direction of an account of nature as an artful order having divine mind as its cause.

Given Eryximachus' account of first principles one is tempted to conclude that he understands the practical portion of the medical science to be directed merely to the maintenance of the proper ratio between contraries within a composite body. That is, the business of the medical practice seems to consist in sustaining health and staving off illness by means of a system of damage control that operates to monitor and direct repletion and evacuation: it adds or subtracts the precise quantity of, for example, the hot that is necessary to maintain the stable balance of the human body (186c–d). Eryximachus, however, has much greater ambitions for his art. He envisions the possibility of instilling "love or unanimity" or, more literally, "sameness of mind" (*homonoia*), between the contraries of the composite, that is, instilling a true or rational principle of unity within the compound (186e). It is this artful principle of unity to which he attaches the name "beautiful Eros" and, as we have seen, it initially appears to be reducible to his understanding of the human good as the bodily good, namely, health as bodily unity. If such a bond could indeed be produced by art, then he would be correct to appeal to Asklepios as the founder of the medical art.

For such a bond would provide for bodily health at its maximum, namely, the perpetual endurance of the compound body or physical immorality. Asklepios is, of course, famous for having possessed the power to make men immortal. It was precisely because he put this power to use that Zeus destroyed him. Eryximachus attributes the account of Asklepios as the founder of the medical science to the poets of Athens (186e). In doing so he suggests that the end toward which he understands science to be ultimately directed—bodily continuance—is derivative not of nature, but of the inexplicable—given his cosmological account—freedom of the human mind or imagination to construct counterfactual "ideals": the poet's dream of a medicine of immortality that would run contrary to every impulse of nature sets the goal for the actual practice of the medical art.[13] Science's realization of this goal, however, in realizing the dreams of the poets, would dispense with poetry in rendering it obsolete. Phantom "wish-fulfillments" would be unnecessary in a world in which dreams have been made reality.

One has certain reservations regarding Eryximachus' implicit understanding of the function of poetry, however. In following Pausanias' lead and attempting to politicize and so make literal the stories of the poets, Eryximachus, like Pausanias, appears to misunderstand the significance of these myths. The story of Asklepios in the hands of the poets, far from being a means of setting the overcoming of individual mortality as the goal for humanity, seems rather an attempt to define the character of the human by viewing it from the perspective of the division between the human and divine understood in terms of the distinction between man (mortal) and god (immortal). Since within the story of the poets that division is maintained through the punishment of the human by the divine, or what appears to be the arbitrary and jealous will of the gods, Eryximachus, in his literal mindedness, concludes that the overcoming of the boundary between mortal and immortal, or the human and the divine, will require toppling the empire of the Olympians and what they appear to support—the law and its punishment. It will require religious and political enlightenment on the broadest possible scale. Eryximachus' speech is divided into three parts. His declaration of his conviction that the poets are right to attribute the origins of the medical art to Asklepios marks the conclusion of the first part. The second part deals with music as a paradigm for the medical art and its practice (187a–e). It is only in the third and final part that he feels he has marshaled his forces such that he is at last in a position to confront the issue of law and god as an obstacle to the realization of the mastery of medical science over human nature (187e–188d).

Before proceeding to the second part of his speech, it is worth noting several of the difficulties raised by Eryximachus' understanding of the first principles of nature and the medical art. First of all, whereas he can provide some account of the dissolution of a composite being, that is, perishing or

death, he can offer no account of the origin of such composite bodies. He cannot, therefore, account for how it is that, at least on the scale of our experience, not decomposition and homogeneous body, but composition and mixed body prevail. In short, therefore, he cannot account for human experience, since, obviously, apart from composite body no such experience is possible. Nor can he account for, indeed he must simply deny, the existence of the universal conatus of bodies to preserve themselves in their state or the capacity of living bodies to maintain themselves in a condition of health, at least over a certain lifespan.[14] Similarly, he cannot account for the phenomena of sexual reproduction and growth, both of which, according to his view, must run contrary to every principle of nature. Indeed, if we were to translate these principles onto the human level—and his use of the word "eros" to describe the fundamental natural attraction of like for like invites us to do so—it would be heterosexual and not homosexual eros that is against nature and would appear to have its origin in art or science.[15] Versions of these absurdities seem to underlie his implicit claim that the medical science in no sense takes nature as its guide in setting the goals that it pursues: because he understands the desire for self-preservation and heterosexual eros to be unnatural he must attribute the origin of the dream of individual immortality that science seeks to realize exclusively to the sui generis products of the poet's art.[16]

By means of these absurdities Plato appears to indicate the character of the problem that theoretical science must always face. The first principles that such a science seems to discover through disinterested inquiry (i.e., by assuming a "comprehensive reach" beyond a merely human point of view) are in fact derivative of science's origin in a practical intention or in the arts as directed to the "use and benefit of man."[17] In the service of such a goal, the arts willy-nilly approach the nature of things from the point of view of making and its requirements and provide an analysis of things entirely from within this perspective, that is, they seek to comprehend things in such a way as to dissolve them into elements from out of which art, acting as a productive cause, can assemble its constructions. But the constructions of art, however elaborate, lack an internal principle of unity—they are aggregates not wholes—and, therefore, it comes as no surprise when theoretical science, forgetting the practical motive of the uncovering of the "elements" that it now claims to have cognized through a "pure" or disinterested inquiry into nature, finds it impossible to "deduce" the world of our experience from these first principles. There is then no theoretical way back from the elements to the "composite beings" of nature. Only the practical intentions and operations of art—its directedness to the good of human beings—can, as it were, bridge this gap. As will be made clear in the unfolding of Eryximachus' argument, however, as soon as the priority of practice to theory in science is admitted, the presuppositions of theory are

compromised and scientific wisdom, in its division into a theoretical and practical branch, runs afoul of itself.

Eryximachus begins the second part of his speech by making clear that if the god he is in the midst of eulogizing is obviously not the natural or sick Eros, neither is it the artful or healthy Eros. The object of his praise is rather Asklepios, the patron and personification of the medical art (187a). It could hardly be otherwise given that it is the medical art that possesses the power to produce the healthy Eros and thereby overcome the division between mortal and immortal. Eryximachus' god, therefore, represents the "captain" of the arts insofar as the medical art not only comprehends the knowledge of that end for which all the other arts serve as means, but is the sole cause of the realization of that end as well. He presides not only over farming and gymnastics, but—as the examples of the arts that Eryximachus adduces make clear—over music, astronomy, divination, and even cooking (187e). The inappropriateness of, at very least, the first two examples employed to lend plausibility to his insistence on the supremacy of the medical art is striking. Contrary to his intention, they seem to show precisely the impossibility of such sovereignty: both farming and gymnastics, of which he claims the "super-natural" god Asklepios is captain, appear to presuppose a good toward which nature already tends of its own accord and which art simply takes over from nature as the end of its endeavors. They both run counter to the antiteleological thrust of his account of the nature of things.

The example of music, however, serves Eryximachus' argument equally poorly. He would have done better never to mention the aphorism of Heraclitus to which he appeals, since, as he himself suggests, it is at odds with his own understanding of harmony (187a). That he does so seems to be motivated by a desire to demonstrate the resolutive powers of his art by performing in deed precisely what it is he articulates in his speech: he "artfully" overcomes the difference between Heraclitus' account of harmony and his own and thereby establishes agreement or harmony where disharmony previously prevailed. In order to do this he presumes to correct Heraclitus' account in two ways: he leaves out the heart of the aphorism that defines Heraclitus' understanding of harmony and he makes successive that which in the original is nonsuccessive or he transforms an account of what a harmony is into an account of how it comes to be or is made.

Heraclitus' entire aphorism, with what Eryximachus has expunged in brackets and what he has interpolated in italics, runs as follows:

> [They do not understand how it] *the one* in differing with itself agrees
> with itself [: a backward-turning harmony], as *is the harmony* of lyre and bow.[18]

The aphorism itself asserts, then, that Eryximachus, in identifying the one with discrete, simple unity, is among those who fail to understand its true character, which is, according to Heraclitus, not simple, but rather a "self" constituted through a differing that is simultaneously an agreeing with itself. This differing in agreement or agreeing in difference cannot have as its "elements," of course, two discrete monads existing prior to their inclusion in the one in precisely the same state as they are found after their inclusion: the reality of such a monadic one is precisely what Heraclitus denies. The structure of the Heraclitean dyadic one, therefore, cannot be articulated in terms of an account of its coming to be through the combination of discrete, prior, and separable elements. On the contrary, its structure would have to be clarified by showing that the parts of this whole cannot be what they are apart from their being together and that, therefore, there is a difference in the one that is constitutive of it and whose structure is not that of an arithmetical two.[19] It is just this understanding of harmony that Eryximachus wishes to suppress in his interpretation of Heraclitus' aphorism. Without this suppression, of course, the aphorism expresses a disagreement with Eryximachus' account on the level of first principles. It seems that the understanding of the character of harmony is a crucial issue for Eryximachus' account. The example of music is, therefore, not merely an example and Heraclitus is *the* opponent who must be refuted or co-opted. If Heraclitus' account of the one as a harmony is intelligible, then Eryximachus' account of the fundamental constitution of nature cannot be correct. Eryximachus' musicology undergirds his cosmology. They stand and fall together.

It is not immediately apparent precisely how Eryximachus understands art to insert agreement between two that are, in his view, by nature different and so make possible a harmony between them. Somehow art removes from the elements that will make up the component parts of harmony—the high and the low—the difference that by nature renders them incommensurate. It thereby allows them to form a "symphony" or "consonance" that he describes as a kind of agreement (*homologia*) (187b). Eryximachus appears to mean that, through the agency of art, high and low are brought under a common measure. This measure must be mathematical in character.[20] In his effort to artfully overcome the difference between himself and Heraclitus on the issue of harmony, Eryximachus breaks apart the complex whole of Heraclitean harmony and treats the fragments of this original one as the elements from which the composite being of harmony is artfully assembled under the aegis of the mathematical or relative measure.[21] Difference and agreement are made to be temporally successive states and art grounded in mathematics the sole cause of the transition from one to the other.

Eryximachus' entire account of the art of music is rooted in the strategy he pursues in "interpreting" Heraclitus' aphorism. Through art the originally unmusical elements of music—the high and the low and the fast and the

slow—are joined together to constitute harmony and rhythm and these in their turn are artfully combined to produce the composite whole of music (187b–c). Eryximachus insists, however, that it is the art of music itself that is the cause of the coming to be of music (187b) and that the whole thus composed through the agency of the musical art is theoretical or "pure" music that Eryximachus claims is prior to any "practical" music (187c), that is, the artful arrangement of actual sounds. It is, however, only when music becomes practical that it gains a relation to the human (187c–d). He seems, therefore, to identify the self-constituting art of theoretical music with a mathematics that transcends all merely human experience and concerns. How this theoretical music causes the harmonies and rhythms of the art of music as practiced to come into being—or how the high and the low and the fast and the slow are artfully joined—is not made clear by Eryximachus. He seems to wish to suggest that the mathematical ratios that correspond, on the one hand, to the intervals of, for example, the fifth or the octave and, on the other hand, to the difference between, for example, a quaver and a semiquaver, *cause* those intervals and differences to be or are the fundamental inaudible source upon which the existence of the audible depends. Presumably, he also wishes to suggest that the theoretical art of music, by means of the application of a unit of measure to velocity and tone, goes about constructing systems of rhythm and scales of intervals within which the fast and the slow and the high and the low are bound together.[22]

When Eryximachus turns from the theoretical to the practical realm of music, which includes the production of musical compositions, he moves from a discussion of the sources and foundations of music to a discussion of its ends. In the third book of the *Republic* Socrates had treated this same theme in the midst of constructing his city in speech. There he had insisted that the practical end toward which music is properly directed is education or the cultivation of human nature. Education, however, was shown to have two forms—one political and the other philosophical. In the former, harmony and rhythm were employed in the shaping of the passions or instilling the moral virtues of moderation and courage in the soul (399a–e). In the latter, they were to encourage a love of the beautiful and delight in reasonable speech as preconditions for the coming into being of philosophy in the minds of those human beings who are naturally predisposed to its pursuit (401e–402d). How these two ends of music are related and whether they are compatible was one of the central topics of Socrates' inquiry. Eryximachus, in claiming that only the medical demiourgos is competent to deal with the question of music in its practical application, presumes then to displace the philosopher's inquiry with the prescriptions of his science. Rather than music contributing to the ends of education or the cultivation of man's specifically human nature in either its political or philosophical aspects, it is to serve in the regulation and gratification of man's nature as the medical

science understands it, namely, those "impulses" that human beings appear to share in common with all other compound bodies or at least with all other animals. The cultivation of either man's political or rational nature is now replaced by the indulgence of his subrational nature as the end of music. This same indulgence, when combined with immortality, proves to be the good as his science understands it.

Since Eryximachus insists that the double Eros and its diagnosis become concerns in regard to music only when musical composition is considered in the light of its capacity to instill and preserve decency or right order (*kosmia*) in human beings, one is initially inclined to take at face value his claim that this implies a return to his former arguments in regard to the practice of medicine, namely, that the well-ordered or artful Eros must be gratified and the disorderly or natural suppressed in order that artful health as he understands it may be instilled (187d). In fact, however, Eryximachus now qualifies his former position by admitting that the example of music reveals that indecency or lack of order, that is, the sickness of Pandemian or Polyhymnian Eros, must be introduced into the "cosmos" of the artfully reconstituted human compound (the order of Uranian Eros) so that the "harvesting" of pleasure without intemperance—or, literally, "lack of pruning" (*akolasia*)—may be provided.

Music, it seems, serves as an example in this regard insofar as in its practice it necessarily includes disharmony in at least two senses: on the one hand, the mathematical purity of the relations between the intervals must be compromised in the adjustments required in tuning up the scale[23] and, on the other hand, harmony is made genuinely "sweet" only through the controlled introduction of certain "sour notes" into a musical composition, that is, concord is felt to be pleasant primarily as a resolution of prior discord. Harmony (the commensurate) without dissonance (the incommensurate) is both practically impossible to achieve and in and of itself so bland as to be displeasing. Actual harmonies, then, can be neither understood as simply the manifestation of mathematical ratios, nor constituted through the complete elimination of all disharmony between the high and the low. Despite Eryximachus' "correction" of Heraclitus, difference in the strong sense (incommensurability) and harmony must be compatible. As soon as the practical component of the art of music is taken into account, it is no longer possible to understand "theoretical music" or mathematics to be the cause or source of music in its practice and Eryximachus' musicology ceases to lend support to his cosmology. This tension between the theoretical and the practical aspects of his science, however, only becomes more acute when the practice of the art of music is made the model for the practice of the medical art.

Just as harmony without disharmony would fail to offer the pleasures appropriate to the practice of the musical art, so the immortal life that,

according to Eryximachus' dream, the medical art would be capable of instilling, precisely because it would be constituted by an order whose principle requires denying at every moment the fundamental tendency of natural Eros, would prove to be a life of constant pain.[24] Mere immortality, therefore, is not the good life for human beings and the fabrications of art alone cannot provide for the human good. Eryximachus may have been correct to call the artfully instilled love between contraries the "beautiful Eros," but was wrong to suggest that the beautiful may be identified with or reduced to the good. Though the artful unity that medicine instills may provide for immortality, if immortality is to be made good, art itself must readmit nature into its order. Difference must be integrated into the harmony and unity established by art and the natural tendency to dissolution indulged, for, Eryximachus believes, it is such indulgence that is the ground of the experience of pleasure in the compound body of animal life. The good is the combined result of irrational necessity and instrumental rationality.

According to the implication of Eryximachus' "scientific hedonism," the highest bliss would be coincident with an unbridled rush toward dissolution. Eryximachus seems to take as his key to the understanding of pleasure the experience of sexual pleasure that, at its peak, leads those who undergo it to exclaim: "I am dying."[25] Pleasure as Eryximachus understands it, however, is incompatible not only with rigid composition, but with achieved decomposition as well. It belongs only to the state that occupies a position in between immortal life simply and the "dead," seperate existence of the monadic elements. This follows strictly from Eryximachus' conception of the bodily preconditions of pleasure: it is elicited by a release from the bonds of composition and is, therefore, necessarily tied to that composition. The human good as Eryximachus understands it then can be characterized as the unending practice of dying and being dead under the supervision of the medical art. He thus offers a "scientific" parody of Socrates' characterization of philosophy in the *Phaedo* (64a).

Insofar as this practice of dying is equivalent to the maintenance of a state between two equally insupportable extremes, however, what his art is meant to secure is the acquisition of the good through the preservation of a version of what the Eleatic Stranger calls "the measure of the mean." The medical art in its practice then cannot rely exclusively or even predominantly upon the mathematical or relative measure, according to which there is no distinction between better and worse in regard to the existence or nonexistence of the compound body. On the contrary, the relative measure must be subordinated to the measure of the mean, which alone is capable of discriminating between good and bad and better and worse. But then the "transhuman" perspective of science must similarly be subordinated to human experience as that in relation to which a determination can be made regarding what is appropriate or fitting, that is, what is in accordance

with the mean relative to man in general and this man in particular.[26] As Eryximachus concedes, it is after all human beings who are to be "gratified" (187d). The discriminations of Eryximachus' ostensibly transhuman theoretical science then are indeed necessarily subordinate to the practical concerns of the human point of view, that is, to the effort to appropriate the good for human beings.

Moreover, if, as Eryximachus believes, pleasure is derivative of a liberation of the elemental tendency of our nature from the pain of the bonds of composition, then it must exist solely as the effect of a release from pain. In other words, Eryximachus is compelled, after his own fashion, to reproduce Socrates' insight into the essential relatedness of the two (*Phaedo* 60b–c) and offer a version of Phaedo's observation that in his experience of the last day of Socrates' life, pain and pleasure, though seemingly exclusive contraries, were strangely blended (59a): pleasure cannot survive the complete dissolution of the bonds of the human compound and, therefore, can never be separate from the pain of such constraint. Pain and pleasure are, according to Eryximachus, by their very nature bound together or mixed and the harmony and unity of art must be compatible with the disharmony and dissolution of nature if this mixture of pleasure and pain is to be secured indefinitely. Eryximachus, despite himself and without his being aware of it, has, under the pressure of the practical applications of his medical art, been forced to concede that contraries are indeed related by nature. He has undermined the first principles of the materialist cosmology that is the foundation of his theoretical science and thereby confirmed rather than refuted Heraclitus' account of the one that in differing agrees with itself. Eryximachus' "harmonization" of his account with that of Heraclitus, in a fashion precisely contrary to his intentions, however, constitutes the self-destruction of his speech. This decomposition indicates the lack of self-reflection at the basis of his science, while simultaneously demonstrating that the pathology he attributes to nature is in fact a shortcoming of his art: his scientific wisdom ultimately lacks rationality insofar as it has no real principle of unity. It is self-contradictory.

If Eryximachus' hedonism forces him, against the grain of his intention, to reproduce the insights of both Heraclitus and Socrates, the confrontation with the sacred law, to which the medical art must aspire when that hedonism is elevated to the level of political practice, involves him in a parody of the rejection of the sacred that both pre-Socratic and Socratic philosophy entail.[27] Despite or perhaps because of this, Eryximachus, in the third and last portion of his speech, does everything he can to conceal the impious consequences of the applications of his art. Thus, he begins by arguing that the art of divination over which the medical art presides is devoted to establishing friendship between the gods and men. The science of divination produces such friendship, he claims, by the overseeing and

healing of lovers (188c–d). For it is "sick" Eros, Eryximachus asserts, that, in its gratification, allows impiety in regard to "parents, both living and dead, and gods" to arise (188c) and it is this impiety, or rather the attempt to restrain it, that makes necessary the punishments of the law and the punitive or "unfriendly" character of the gods. If it is to cure the sickness in regard to Eros that prevents gods and human beings from relating to one another as friends, however, the science of divination must include within it a complete knowledge of the truth regarding the divine (or a science of astronomy), on the one hand, and an understanding of sacred law and piety (188d), on the other.

Eryximachus pretends to discover the cause of such impiety entirely in the indecent, sick, or natural Eros. He is then able to attribute the cause of its opposite to the decent, healthy, or artful Eros. Given that he has established immortality in conjunction with the "harvesting" of pleasure or the supervised indulgence of natural Eros as the goal of the medical art, however, the latter must be equally subversive of ancestral law. That the indulgence of the natural love of like for like on the human level will find expression either in homosexuality or incest or both and that such inclinations run counter to the family and the sacred law that undergirds it is clear. The artful achievement of immortality, however, not only puts human beings on a par with the gods, but effectively eliminates the distinction between the generations or the difference between old and young and overcomes, thereby, any basis for the reverence for the ancestral. The medical art, therefore, both opens the way to incest and necessarily dispenses with the practice of burial and the filial piety surrounding it. The "decent" Eros encourages impiety in matters that concern parents and gods as much as "the other one" (188c).

Consequently, Eryximachus' science of divination, as an extension of the medical art, offers a diagnosis of the human condition on the political level that locates the cause of the harsh and unpleasant aspects of political life precisely in sacred law and piety and in its curative practice seeks to eliminate both these obstacles to human well-being. As ultimately serving to gratify the impulses of nature, the medical practice takes up, if with all due "moderation and justice" (188d), the cause of the "hubris," "injustice," "indecency," and "pleonexia" of the elements (188a). Thus, the science of astronomy that is under the supervision of the medical art works to reveal that the divine, in the sense of the cosmological "order," lends support neither to piety nor sacred law, but, if anything, to their violation,[28] insofar as it shows that the decent or orderly aspect of the seasons is the result of mere happenstance (188a), whereas its dissolution is a fundamental necessity of nature.[29] Astronomy, that is, teaches that the "divine" or superhuman "order" of things, is not ruled by the justice of the gods and that, therefore, the sacred finds no anchor in the divine. The science of divination replaces

the belief in the providence of the gods with knowledge of the indifference or hostility of divine nature to the conventional order.

Even while paying lip service to piety then, Eryximachus employs the revelations of astronomy as a means to clear the heavens of the Olympians. This, however, is merely preparatory to his putting his own philanthropic god of the medical science in their place. The prescriptions of "Asklepios," rather than the punishments of Zeus, are from henceforth to provide for the endurance of the "composite body" of the city and, we presume, the families that, as it were, form its component parts. But if the "statesman-like" Asklepios[30] or the ruling medical science is to operate according to the terms laid down by Eryximachus at the close of his discussion of music, that is, by preserving order while introducing disorder in a calculated fashion into the mix in order to allow for the harvesting of pleasure and the possession of the good, then the medical art must either permit incest in just the right doses—which is perhaps not an entirely practicable solution—or find a therapeutic displacement for such antinomian gratification. Having dispensed with soul and made literal, and thereby dispensed with, poetry, Eryximachus cannot appeal to tragedy to fulfill such a therapeutic role on a psychological plane. Only homosexual pederasty—which reflects the incestuous relation both in its being a love between old and young and of the kindred for the kindred—can fulfill this function and ensure the harvesting of pleasure within the proper bounds established by art. Thus, Eryximachus finds an artful substitute for incest in that brand of eroticism in which he himself apparently indulges, if with all due moderation and "pruning" (187e).

In his effort to complete Pausanias' speech, therefore, Eryximachus not only attempts to give what he takes to be the true account of the distinction between Uranian and Pandamian Eros, but also the true justification for pederasty and the true limits of its proper practice, which are to be established not by law, but by art. Whereas Pausanias grounded his defense of pederasty in its ostensible utility in educating the soul to virtue, Eryximachus, having, by his own lights, reduced soul to body (and mirroring his redirection of music and medicine away from the goals of education and health towards that of pleasure), justifies pederasty as the proper, artful mode of the introduction of pleasure into the "compound body" of the city. He thus dispenses with both the gods of the city and the tragedy of the poets and looks forward to replacing the pain that the law and the gods of the law inflict upon human life through the suppression of "natural" eros, with the pleasures involved in an artful indulgence of this same eros that appears to be simultaneously compatible with the preservation of the conventional order of the city and family. He will perfect the constitution of the city by artfully introducing a version of the cosmological into the political order.

As we see, Eryximachus understands eros to be the central problem for the city, and therefore, the chief obstacle to the enlightened rule of science within the city. But it is eros within the context of the family that he takes to be the true difficulty in this regard. Just as in the case of the individual compound body, then—for whose origin in sexual generation he could not account—so in the case of the compound body of the city precisely that phenomenon that requires the treatment of the medical art, at the same time escapes the understanding of medical science as far as its genesis is concerned. We might then assume, given this theoretical abstraction from its coming to be and his positing of immortality as the goal of the medical art, that the family will be abolished with the advent of the enlightened rule of science. Though perhaps, in one sense, desirable from Eryximachus' point of view, the elimination of heterosexual eros and the family would appear, nevertheless, to be impossible insofar as the total divorce of sexual pleasure from sexual reproduction would entail cutting off the supply of the boys who are the objects of the pederast's delectation. The "pruning" or moderating of pederasty by the medical art, therefore, must consist partly in prescribing marriage, heterosexual sex, and the engendering of children as a painful duty contrary to the natural inclinations of the citizens. "Love" between man and woman will persist only as an effect of the prescriptions of art and the "bitter pill" of marriage will stand opposed to the sugared sweets of pederasty and be made palatable only through the extramarital indulgence in the latter. If the family is then to remain a component of the city, it would seem that, just as the artful indulgence in pleasure still tends in the direction of the dissolution of the individual, so the artful gratifications of a quasinatural eros (pederasty) will still stand in deep tension with the requirements of the family as an essential part of political life and thus with political life simply. Eryximachus, like Pausanias, is ultimately forced to admit or imply that pederasty, like incestuous eros, necessarily runs counter to what is required to sustain the political order or that pederasty, like incest, is essentially antinomian in character.[31]

The antinomian character of Eryximachus' "natural" Eros, however, can only prove to be an insuperable difficulty for the efforts of the medical science to bring it under its control. For from the point of view of the ignorant citizen-patient, the prescriptions of the wise statesman-physician must appear as arbitrary—and, therefore, as provocative of the will to resist and transgress—as did the laws of the unenlightened regime.[32] Indeed, what Eryximachus' entire account implies, but what he somehow fails to perceive, is that the pleasure of eros as he understands it is perfectly incompatible with "moderation and justice," insofar as its scintillation is essentially coincident with the transgression of any moderate or just order. Accordingly, what Eryximachus takes to be the expression of a transhuman natural eros is in fact the bastard child of human nature in union with convention.[33]

Eryximachus' blind spot in this regard seems to be the offspring of his character: he is a man who wishes to understand his pederastic sexual inclinations, that is, his unnatural and subrational desires, in terms of a fusion of nature and rationality. He reassures himself of his own respectability or decency by contending that the intoxications of his antinomian impulses are perfectly compatible with the sober calculations of his art and the "relief of man's estate."[34] In this he mirrors the city that is his home: Athens, the "tyrant city,"[35] believes its "erotic" ambition for universal empire to be perfectly compatible with enlightened rationality and democratic law. His particular brand of self-delusion, moreover, appears to correspond to the pretensions of art or science that he and his speech embody: just as the antinomianism of pederastic eros is in fact derivative and dependent upon the law that it opposes, so the pretension of art or science to possess a wisdom capable of offering a solution to the human problem on the level of political practice—that is, its claim to be able to displace the putative wisdom of the law with the wisdom of science—appears to be ultimately dependent upon the law. Eryximachus' science takes not only the law's claim to rightful rule, but its understanding of the fundamental character of all things as its starting point. As Pausanias' speech made clear, the law presupposes that being is composed of discrete and unrelated contraries: the monads of the beautiful and the ugly (180d–e). Moreover, the fundamental assumption regarding nature in the light of which the practical branch of Eryximachus' science operates—namely, that human nature is in and of itself sick—appears to be derivative of the law, insofar as the law assumes that human nature is bad and that law alone can provide for a good that is contrary to that nature.[36] Finally, it seems to be the experience of the law and the imposition of its constraints upon the human soul that leads Eryximachus to identify pleasure as, on the one hand, exclusively the effect of a release from bonds and, on the other, that alone which makes life worth living or, in effect, the human good. For the intensity of the pleasure felt in the release from the law's constraints obscures the reality of pleasures that are not dependent upon a similar relation, while the encounter of such pleasure immediately upon leaving behind the limits of convention gives it the appearance of a discovery of nature.[37] Since, however, the pleasures that the law seeks most obviously to limit or suppress are those of the body, one of the effects of this appearance is the identification of nature with body.[38] Scientific materialism is a phantom of the law. Given, therefore, the way in which the law has saturated both "ordinary language" and human experience, any attempt to articulate the nature of things directly must unavoidably result in reproducing the idealities of lawful opinion in the guise of the first principles of a materialist cosmology. Eryximachus' speech demonstrates the necessity of Socrates' "second sailing" or why it is that in seeking "the truth of the beings" one must "take refuge in the speeches" (*Phaedo* 99e).

The incoherent character of both Pausanias' and Eryximachus' speeches demonstrates the impossibility of "naturalizing" the city in the way that Phaedrus seemed to envision: the city can neither find its ground in the first principles of nature, nor find its end in the life that is "according to nature." That is, Pausanias and Eryximachus together show the impossibility of genuine enlightenment on the political level and so display the ground of Athens' inevitable failure to unite the revelation of the truth of nature with the necessities of the political order. As a consequence, they show the inexpugnable character of the possibility of the persecution of philosophy and the inevitable dissolution of "Greekness" on the political level in a universal tyranny or a resurgent piety or a union of the two.

Nevertheless, in illustrating the competing pretensions of art and law to encompass and satisfy human life as a whole, Pausanias and Eryximachus together demonstrate that the city, as the battleground for their rival claims to wisdom (and as, therefore, necessarily incoherent in its structure), always contains within it the possibility of an ascent to the truth. If political enlightenment can never be complete, no age of darkness can ever be unrelieved.

In his speech, Aristophanes will articulate his understanding of the grounds for the necessary failure of the enlightened city, that is, his understanding of why eros cannot be happily integrated into the political order. He will do this by radicalizing what he takes to be Phaedrus' insight into the essentially political character of eros, while, nevertheless, abstracting from Phaedrus' insight into the fundamental difference between the beautiful and the good that the denouements of Pausanias' and Eryximachas' speeches have confirmed. In radicalizing this Phaedrian claim, however, he will deny Phaedrus' assumptions that eros can serve as the ground of moral virtue, that the city is rooted, however tenuously, in nature and that there is a life superior to the political life that is the truly human life, the life of the lover of speeches. Thus, Aristophanes' abstraction from the question of the good and the beautiful and the relation between them leads him, while giving his account of the reasons for the necessary failure of Eryximachus' speech, to ally himself with Eryximachus in denying the possibility of Socratic erotics. While he attributes the origin of the human to chance, he denies that the results of chance are in any way good. Put differently, Aristophanes will characterize eros neither as love of the beautiful, nor of the good, but of one's own, while at the same time denying that there is anything for human beings that is genuinely their own.

PART TWO

ATHENS AND THE POETS

FIVE

ARISTOPHANES: EROS, SOUL, AND LAW

The failure of Eryximachus' attempt in the name of the city to solve the human problem on the assumption that what is ordinarily understood to be an attribute of soul, namely, Eros, can be deduced from bodily first principles (and so "treated" by the science of body) makes room for Aristophanes' claim that as poet he possesses the knowledge of soul that alone is competent to articulate and deal with the problematic character of man. In his speech, he will argue that soul and the desires of the soul constitute a realm that is irreducible and in some way separate from body and its needs. Soul and its structure, he will claim, are the chance products of law and lawful piety and, as such, grounded in accident and unreality. The poet, in full knowledge of the phantom character of the distinctively human, practices a therapeutic art that trades in such phantoms. But neither science nor art is competent to dispel these phantoms and allow man access to a good that is real. For what human beings long for, according to Aristophanes, is not the good, but what is their own and that there exists that which could rightfully be called one's own is simply the most persistent and ineradicable illusion by which human life is haunted and human desire misled. Enlightenment is impossible not only for the city, but for man as man as well.

In Aristophanes' speech, the implications of the failure of Eryximachus' science are made clear. The city cannot be understood to be grounded in or derived from cosmological first principles and the human things must be seen to constitute a distinct and independent realm. Aristophanes' own argument, however, leads to the conclusion that this realm is defined primarily by the soul and its experiences and that as such it is ultimately unintelligible. His knowledge of soul has at its core, then, his knowledge that ultimate knowledge of soul and, therefore, of the human things is not available. Precisely because the human must be considered apart from cosmos it is cut off from what Aristophanes still seems to presume to be the

true measure of intelligibility—what is by nature in the sense of what is primordial or original. Though in one sense liberated from the pretensions of Eryximachus' science, in another Aristophanes still shares and labors in the light of its most fundamental presuppositions. He is strangely situated in a no-man's-land between pre-Socratic wisdom and Socratic knowledge of ignorance.

It is on the basis of the superiority of his knowledge of soul over Eryximachus' knowledge of body that Aristophanes disputes the legitimacy of Eryximachus' presumption to act as the "guardian" of the comic poet and his speech (189b): the city of arts is not competent to exercise rule over the poet and his art.[1] On the contrary, it is the latter that possesses the power to alleviate the difficulties of the former insofar as it is inseparable from the city of law. The joke that Aristophanes makes at Eryximachus' expense that is the starting point of this dispute reveals the funny or ugly truth that the physician cannot admit, but of which the poet claims to know the grounds, namely, that disorder can be treated only with further disorder (189a).

Eryximachus, however, scores two points against Aristophanes that prove to be keys to the limitations of his speech. He enjoins him to "look at what you are making" (*hora ti poieis*), that is, to look to his activity as a poet, and to "take heed" in regard to—or literally to "turn his mind" (*proseke ton noun*)—to his speaking (189a–b). As to the first point, Aristophanes himself declares that Eryximachus "speaks well" (189b). However, he does not attend to either Eryximachus' remarks or his own approval of the first with sufficient literal-mindedness—it is precisely mind and speech, and, therefore, his own account as it embodies his own alleged insights that Aristophanes consistently ignores or abstracts from in offering that account. Aristophanes' speech does not include within it a reflection upon itself and the grounds of its possibility. By his own account, Aristophanes has nowhere to stand.

Aristophanes begins his speech by announcing the advent of a new religion centered around a new god (189c–d). Not science, but poetry is competent to initiate the sort of religious revolution proposed by Eryximachus. According to the teaching of the poet, if the truth of the "power of Eros" were known to human beings, the greatest altars would be erected and the greatest sacrifices offered in his name—he would displace Zeus as the god of gods—since, unlike the envious and punitive "Father of Gods and Men," Eros is "the most philanthropic of gods" and a "helper" of human beings (189d). Indeed he is, like Eryximachus' Asklepios, a physician competent to deal with an illness that, if it were healed, would secure the happiness of the human race (189c–d). Aristophanes declares that those who are present are to act as the apostles of this new religion (189d): they will spread the gospel of the god of love and convert the world to his novel creed. What he

does not say is that in dealing with this illness this god will in fact heal it. In order to assess the power of the god Eros—and its limits—Aristophanes insists that it is necessary that we first come to know the nature of human beings and their suffering (189d). He proceeds to tell a story of the coming to be of human beings and the causes of their affliction that is meant to provide us with just this knowledge.

In one sense, Aristophanes certainly knows better than Eryximachus when it comes to the status of causal accounts of the genesis of the human: unlike Eryximachus who takes such things literally, he knows that this is poetry and employs a story about the coming to be of human beings merely as an instrument in the interests of displaying what human beings always have been and necessarily are. Yet in making the claim that human beings are made human by the law and the gods of the law (190c–191c) he seems to retain at the core of his speech the causal assumptions operative in Eryximachus' account. As a consequence, he also appears to hold with Eryximachus that the natural is to be identified with the first in the sense of the original or primordial.[2]

According to the opening of Aristophanes' story, the original or primordial human, or rather prehuman, condition was one of wholeness. His story then undertakes to give an account of how present day human beings in their partial and fragmentary condition came to be from this original state of completeness. It is the story of the fall of man. Though each individual was originally whole and complete, our original nature was nonetheless divided into three subspecies or "genera" (*gene*) each member of which was constituted by a pair of present-day human beings. Accordingly, these three genera also comprised three noncomplementary genders—male, female, and a hybrid that survives in name alone, "androgynous" (189d–e). According to Aristophanes, man is not partial or incomplete on account of being of a certain gender or, at least, this is not the sort of partiality and incompleteness the origin of which he wishes to explain. These proto-human beings were spherical in shape and Aristophanes accounts for this fact by appealing to their origin: they were the offspring of three different natural beings—Sun, Moon, and Earth (190b). Although the fact that they gave birth to offspring seems to indicate that Sun, Moon, and Earth are to be thought of as living beings, we are apparently not permitted from this to conclude that they are cosmic gods: he never calls them gods, nor do they give birth to divine offspring. Aristophanes rather appears to wish, on the one hand, to indicate that our ancestors owe their origin to nature or cosmos, while, on the other hand, to restrict the divine to its conventional or noncosmic versions or to those gods who are either political or anthropomorphic in character.[3] Be that as it may, though they derived both their existence and their shape from nature, our ancestors were under the rule of these conventional gods, namely, the Olympian pantheon with Zeus at its head (190c). Zeus, the god of lawful

justice, and his siblings and progeny, have their nonmythic equivalent in the law, lawful justice, and the conventional realm as a whole. Aristophanes appears, therefore, to suggest that not even at their most "natural" or primitive did human beings stand outside of the horizon of convention and law. The strength and robustness of our ancestors, combined with the questionable legitimacy of the rule of this convention, that is, of the sovereignty of the Olympian gods, engendered in our ancestors a hubristic spirit of rebellion: they had "great thoughts" (190b) and made an assault upon the Olympians in the hope of overturning their rule (190b–c). The phrase "great thoughts" has been lifted by Aristophanes straight out of Pausanias' speech wherein it was applied to the effect produced by pederastic eros upon lover and beloved (182c). Aristophanes preserves Pausanias' connection between "thinking big" and two being together, while denying that eros is the cause of either. As we shall see, eros is, on the contrary, a fairly distant consequence of these "great thoughts." Though Aristophanes appears to understand this phrase to signify simply the pride endemic to our original state, taken literally the phrase has a cognitive value: our original nature was a whole made up of a couple (according to present-day terms) who together were capable of thinking "great thoughts." Their capacity for great thoughts was combined with an unparalleled swiftness of motion (190a–b).[4]

The failure of our ancestors' attempt on the gods resulted in what appears to be punishment for their ostensible crime. In the deliberations of Zeus and his fellow gods, however, the issue of what to do with the defeated circle people is not one of right (190c–d). Aristophanes appears to wish to indicate that convention does not have considerations of justice and injustice as its deepest ground, but rather necessity and compulsion. His speech as a whole presents a picture of what he understands the character of this necessity to be: it proves to be the necessary evil of the violence exercised upon prehuman nature in order to render it suitable for participation in the city, that is, fully human in the sense in which Aristophanes seems to understand this. In the immediate terms of the story, Zeus is compelled to preserve the circle people—instead of obliterating them as he had the race of the giants—so as to preserve the sacrifices and honors that they provide to the gods (190c). If we follow the lead of the teachings of Aristophanes' own plays, what this indicates is that the existence of the gods is entirely dependent upon their recognition and worship by human beings.[5] The being of the gods is identical to that of human opinion or belief.

Zeus devises what appears to be a very clever plan: he will split the circle people in half, thus weakening them and eliminating the threat their strength poses, while simultaneously preserving and indeed doubling the sacrifices that they provide to the gods, that is, redoubling their piety (190d). Zeus himself cuts the circle people in half, while his son Apollo is given the job of "healing" them following their cutting (190e). This healing involves

a reshaping that leaves them in a state that resembles not that of their original progenitors, the naturally first beings, but that of the conventionally first beings, that is, the Olympian gods themselves. The conventional gods give man a conventional shape, but this conventional shape is the genuinely human shape. If it is true that the being of the conventional gods is utterly dependent upon the human, it is equally true that the existence of the human as such is dependent upon the being of the conventional gods.[6] Human life is grounded in conventional opinion and belief, but this conventional opinion is not simply arbitrary—it in its turn is grounded in necessity or what is required for political life.

Zeus' punishment or prudent device produces certain results that Zeus himself neither intended nor foresaw. Their nature having been cut in two, the newly constituted human beings immediately seek out their other half from which they have been separated and, embracing this other half, they seek to grow together again (191a). Neglecting all other pursuits, however, they begin to die off from hunger and inactivity (191b). In other words, the immediate, though accidental, effect of Zeus' punishment is the coming to be of eros as Aristophanes understands it, namely, the attempt to make one out of two and thereby heal our nature by a return to an original condition of wholeness (191c–d). Given our ancestors' total reconfiguration, however, this attempt must prove unsuccessful and lead not to reunification, but annihilation. Eros, according to Aristophanes—and in this he agrees with Eryximachus—is originally and directly linked to death.

It is only when Zeus himself, taking over from his son Apollo, provides a stopgap measure that the accidental and initially disastrous consequences of Zeus' seemingly clever plan are mitigated (191b–c). Zeus alters the mode of reproduction of human beings such that they generate in one another and in so doing find a temporary satisfaction in sexual union (191b). That is, Zeus artfully associates erotic longing and sexual intercourse. They are not, in and of themselves, related, as are eros and death. Indeed, the link between eros and sex that Zeus engineers seems rather to be a ruse whereby the original connection between eros and death is concealed, though not severed.

Through this story, Aristophanes argues that our humanity is a product of the collision of our original "prehuman" nature and the humanizing constraints of convention. Human beings are made human through the process of the imposition of the law upon their nature and through the piety that supports the supremacy of the law. Now since, according to the terms of the story, erotic longing arises within human beings only posterior to the imposition of the law upon our nature, the poet argues that eros is the result of this same imposition: eros is the hangover we are left with once the drunkenness of great thoughts has been sobered up by the punishments and prescriptions of lawful piety. Not wisdom, but eros begins in fear of the lord. But the erotic longing that Zeus generated through his actions was not

foreseen by him. According to Aristophanes, eros is the chance result of the law and the accidental concomitant to divine terror. But since erotic longing seems to lie at the center of our humanity, so far are we from being able to deduce the human from the first principles of nature that we must rather admit that humanity is the chance result of convention. It is evident then that Aristophanes takes neither our humanity nor its erotic character to be simply first or natural.

There are five more or less discrete sections to Aristophanes' speech. The first announces the advent of a new religion centered around the god Eros (189c–d). The second concerns our original nature and its metamorphosis under the pressures of convention or the coming to be of eros as the distinctively human trait (189d–191d). The third deals with the various kinds of erotic attraction (191d–192b). The fourth deals with the essential similarity of all erotic longing despite these differences (192b–e). And the fifth returns to the consideration of the god Eros while rejecting the revolutionary character of the first presentation (192e–193e). We have now arrived at the third and central section of Aristophanes' speech. He begins his discussion here by remarking that "each one of us is a token (*symbalon*) of a human being" (191d): we are each like the half of a coin that has been split in two. Every individual, it would seem, possesses somewhere in the world another half that would uniquely complement his fragmentary nature and thereby mend his mutilated condition. Recognition of such a complementary partner would seem to have to operate along the lines of the recognitions contrived by those "artless" poets whom Aristotle criticizes in his *Poetics*. Because of their perplexity, he says, these poets make one character unwittingly reveal his identity to another to whom he is closely related by means of scars or marks like those that "the earth born bear upon their bodies."[7] One of these artless and perplexed poets is Homer who contrives to have Odysseus' nurse recognize him by means of the scar on his thigh.[8] Such marks are, however, unconvincing to his wife who tests her husband's identity in a multitude of subtle ways, none of which seems probing enough to establish the truth of his identity in her eyes.[9] Similarly, Jocasta apparently takes the scars on her husband's ankles and his hobbled gait to be of no significance in determining who he is. In the case of Aristophanes' lovers, however, it seems equally impossible to recognize with surety one's other half: the "mark" that each of us bears upon us—our conventional human shape—is perfectly generic in character. Moreover, after the first generation, human beings cease to be "earth born" and are sexually engendered. They consequently lack any unique connection to some other half. We may believe or feel ourselves to be a "token," but we are no such thing. What we are, then, does not correspond to what we believe we are and in claiming that each of us is a token, therefore, Aristophanes may mean to suggest not something like the

scar of Odysseus, but rather the lock of hair that, in a false syllogism whose conclusion happens to correspond to the truth, Electra takes to be a "token" of the return of her brother Orestes.[10] Human beings, in that case, may, in their false belief about what eros longs for, point to the truth.

In the present context, however, Aristophanes simply stresses the fact that our belief that we are a fragment that has a unique complement in another fragment finds a constant refutation in reality: all married men and women, if they were to uninhibitedly follow their erotic desires, would end up as serial adulterers (191d–e) and Aristophanes might be thought to suggest that, rather than a particular individual being the specific complement to our nature, eros is directed simply to the generality of the sex toward which we happen to be inclined—homosexuals to the same and heterosexuals to the opposite sex. Erotic attraction, by this account, would be perfectly generic and the belief that we are destined for a particular man or woman a wholly empty one. But this would fail to explain our constant sense of dissatisfaction and fly in the face of Aristophanes' insistence that the incompleteness of which eros is the sign cannot simply be identified with our sexual nature. If, however, as Aristotle claims in the *Poetics*,[11] the "best recognitions"—those occurring through "syllogism" or "probabilities"—are either those of brother and sister (Orestes and Electra or Orestes and Iphigenia) or of mother and son (Oedipus and Jocasta), then erotic longing would find its true fulfillment in incestuous unions. The fact that, in the superficial terms of the story, the original lovers were, to put it weakly, closely related by blood, seems to lend some plausibility to the suggestion that Aristophanes has Oedipus in mind as the truth toward which human beings as "tokens" point. If so, then Aristophanes would agree with Eryximachus that Oedipus is at the center of eros and so the problematical center of the city and man.[12]

Confirmation that this is indeed Aristophanes' understanding of the matter is to be found in the fact that he echoes, once again, Pausanias' speech in his praise of the "manly" pederasts who, as he claims, are not shameless, but bold and in their manly boldness not only love "that which is akin to themselves," but take part in political affairs (192a). Keeping Pausanias' speech in mind, the political activity of the pederasts would seem to consist in overturning established regimes (after the pattern of Harmodius and Aristogeiton) or participating in tyrannical rule (after the pattern of Hipparchus).[13] Thus, Aristophanes appears to link the incest of Oedipus to his tyrannical rule and declare both to be the necessary results of erotic longing.[14] However, since both adultery and pederasty are offered in this section as examples of the effects of eros, one perhaps should generalize Aristophanes' teaching in the following terms. Eros is essentially antinomian and what eros really longs for is not so much the union with another human being in order to complete our nature, as the overturning of the law that has mutilated and afflicted it. Eros retains, if in a weakened and diluted state, something of

the rebelliousness and hubris of our original nature. It is the fading echo of the "great thoughts" of the strong and robust circle people.

Given his account of the criminal core of erotic longing, what Aristophanes must explain is how it is that human beings somehow necessarily come to believe that this longing might be satisfied through union with another human being. This is the burden of the fourth part of his speech (192b–e). In offering this explanation he reveals what it is to which the conventional shape or structure of our humanity may be said to belong. Consequently he also makes clear the procedure he has employed in constructing his poetic account of the coming to be of the human: he has offered a bodily image of the nonbodily or portrayed a condition of soul in corporeal terms.

Aristophanes begins this portion of his speech by reaffirming his claim that to link eros and sexual gratification is an error, if an error to which lovers themselves necessarily fall prey (192c). His insistence now that sexual union could never by mistaken for the end of the desire of two lovers in their being together (192c) seems to be in the service of making clear what he understands to be the disjunction between bodily union and the completion for which eros longs.[15] For this longing is a "desire of the soul," he says, though what it is that their souls long for the lovers themselves are unable to say (192c–d). Aristophanes puts forward a thought experiment in order to interpret for us the riddling speeches of lovers and the true character of their desires. He brings on stage a second "healer god," one apparently more philanthropic than Apollo whose "healing," after all, was ancillary to his father's punitive actions. Aristophanes imagines Hephaestus, the personification of the arts, standing over two lovers with his tools and asking them what it is they hope to get for themselves from one another (192d–e). The lovers are perplexed by his question and their perplexity is, as we shall see, well founded. Indeed, perplexity will turn out to be inseparable from erotic longing as such. Hephaestus, therefore, speaks for them and makes them an offer that, Aristophanes claims, not one lover would reject. He would, in fact, *believe* that he had heard what he had been desiring all along. Hephaestus offers to fuse the lovers together "so that—though two—you would be one." More precisely he offers them the possibility of living *as if* they were one in life and of really *being* together as one in death (192e).

What Aristophanes' thought experiment apparently reveals is that the end of erotic longing can only be found in a union of souls. The latter, however, may be accomplished only through the embrace of naked soul and naked soul, that is, it presupposes the separation of soul from body and, therefore, the existence of the separate soul "in Hades" (192e). Put simply, the union of soul with soul that the lovers seek can be achieved, as it were, only in death. But then such a union is identical with the annihilation of the one seeking it: as Aristotle says of Aristophanes' lovers in his *Politics*,

in their union "it must necessarily happen that both or one of them disappear."[16] The perplexity the lovers feel then regarding the end of their soul's desire is not simply that it cannot be had through a bodily union, but that it cannot be had at all. For the satisfaction of the lovers' desire is incompatible with the existence of the lovers themselves. Thus though we "believe," as Aristophanes says (192e), that the offer Hephaestus makes to the lovers—to fuse two souls into one—would be the means to overcoming our fragmentary or mutilated condition, this belief appears to be as false as the belief that our longing for completion might be satisfied in bodily union. The truth of this belief, therefore, is the perplexity the lovers feel regarding what it is that would fulfill their desire, for this perplexity is identical with the divination of their souls of the truth that no such fulfillment is possible.

The phantom or false character of the lovers' assumption that their desire might be fulfilled through union with another, however, appears to have as its ground the phenomenon that Aristophanes points to through his conceit that Zeus artfully rearranged our nature in order falsely to link eros and sexual intercourse. That is, the lovers' mistaken belief that their erotic longing might be satisfied through the union of soul with soul seems to result from the fact that in their perplexity they do thoughtlessly precisely what the poet has done in full awareness, namely, portray a phenomenon of soul in bodily terms. They interpret the longing of the soul to overcome the conventional form or structure that the law has imposed upon it in terms of the bodily desire for union with another human body or sexual congress.

It now appears possible to translate all of the mythical aspects of Aristophanes' account into elements of an argument. If the imposition of a conventional structure upon the soul is the reality standing behind the image of the reshaping of the human body performed by Zeus' son Apollo, the "prior" splitting that Zeus himself undertakes must be understood as representative of the law's division of the original one of the ensouled body into the two of body and soul.[17] However, since simultaneous to the coming-to-be of eros as the accidental consequence is the coming-to-be of the fear of divine punishment as the intended consequence of the law, we may further conclude that the structure of the soul itself is defined by the tension between the passion of eros as the resistance and the passion of fear as the acquiescence to the order of the law and the punitive gods.[18] The conventional structure of soul is thus accompanied by a constant awareness that we are falling short of a complete conformity to the law. We are always aware of the presence within us of "culpable error." The conflict between fear and desire that defines the soul gives rise to a persistent sense of shame (192e–193a; cf. 191a).

Aristophanes, then, is arguing that it is through the law and the piety surrounding it that we leave behind our original condition of animal embodiment and enter the specifically human realm constituted by the experiences

of soul as distinct and separate. These experiences themselves, however, are defined and structured by the tension or conflict between an impossible desire and an unreal fear and the sense of shame that is the offspring of this conflict. The specifically human realm is a realm of phantoms. The desire to overcome this split between body and soul, therefore, appears to be a desire at one and the same time to return to reality and to a prehuman or bestial state. But since that bestial state would be the result of a successful overturning of the law and the conventional shape of the soul, erotic longing is, at the deepest level, a wish to renounce one's law-defined humanity in favor of the subhuman understood not simply as the bestial, but as the criminally impious. Aristophanes' circle men are simply comical versions of Typhon[19]—the most powerful of the "earth-born" giants who sought to overturn the rule of Zeus and the Olympians (190c–b)—and, as such, represent as much the antinomian end that eros pursues as the original nature that preceded it. Aristophanes understands erotic longing to be the animating center of the ambition of the tyrant.[20] The tyrannical ambition to divest oneself of the constraints of the law, however, appears, in Aristophanes view, to be self-contradictory in character insofar as he seems to argue that along with our humanity our self and self-awareness are the effect of the separation of soul and body and the structuring of soul that are the consequences of the law: the conflict between eros and fear that defines that structure also seems, in Aristophanes' view, to provide the preconditions for the self and self-awareness.[21] This is indicated by the poet in his story by the fact that the double faces of the circle people look out in opposite directions (190a) such that the possibility of a face-to-face encounter arises only after the splitting Zeus performs and the efforts of the two halves to reunite.

According to Aristophanes, our concern with self and what is our own, and our self-assertion in attempting to reclaim what we believe to have once been our own, are derivative of the law that we, in our ignorance and perplexity, take to be the chief obstacle to the reconstitution of our self and the reclamation of our own. To genuinely divest ourselves of the constraints of piety, shame, and law and return to what we believe to be our original self and most our own would thus require giving up the only self that we will ever know and the only thing that we may call our own. Human beings long to make the real their own as human beings, without recognizing that body alone is real and the soul and its unreality are what constitute the human. For human beings as human beings there is no possibility of making the real one's own. At its core, therefore, the human is self-contradictory, irrational, and saturated with falsehood. In the light of this claim Aristophanes appears compelled to conclude that human life is an irresolvable perplexity and as such simply no good. According to his view, Eyximachus was right to identify nature and body, but ignorant of the irreducible unnaturalness of the human soul; and Phaedrus was wrong

to believe that one could let eros go public and still retain a private good: there is no non-lover; eros is definitive of the human and, as essentially political, rules out any transpolitical life defined by a transpolitical good available to man as man. The city is a world of falsehood from which there is no ascent and man is not merely suffering from a sickness, he is a sickness and this sickness has no cure.

Given these conclusions, it is surprising to find Aristophanes in the fifth and closing portion of his speech echoing those claims from its opening according to which eros is not the chief attribute of human beings or the most prominent symptom of our illness, but a god or a divine physician who is able to overcome our suffering and heal our affliction (193a–c). In fact, however, by the end of his speech Aristophanes has ceased to call Eros a physician. He is now rather a "leader and general" (193b). Through the course of the speech the role of healer has been taken over first by Apollo and then Hephaestus, whose promises to satisfy our desires through the ministrations of his divine art prove impossible to fulfill. Whatever the god Eros may provide for us, therefore, it will not be the self-contradictory and self-destructive "fulfillment" for which the soul most deeply longs. Any aid that this god can provide will be proportionate to the incurable character of the disease and the limitations of his own being. As Aristophanes' entire speech makes clear, however, this god of love derives what being he has from the art of the poet. In the practice of his art, Aristophanes has simply personified and divinized what he himself has shown to be a human passion. He has fabricated a god before our eyes.[22]

The real question, then, does not concern the character of the benefit that the god Eros can offer, but that of the aid that the poet intends to provide to human beings through the god that he has made. Aristophanes prepares the ground for an answer to this question by reminding us of the fear with which human life has been saturated on account of the threat of divine punishment that stands as the foundation of the law. We may, he says, look forward to being split yet again if we are not orderly in our conduct toward the gods, that is, if we do not exhibit sufficient signs of piety (193a). It is primarily this fear, it would seem, and only secondarily our erotic longing, that the poet attempts to assuage through the making of his new god. That is, the poet alters the effects of piety by making its chief motive not fear, but hope (193d). Thus, instead of offering up our worship to the gods simply from the terror of divine punishment, we will do so now because the novel god Eros promises to reward us for our piety in some future life by returning us to our ancient nature or retrieving for us that which we believe to have once been our own (193c).

This hope, however, can no more be fulfilled than Zeus can be expected to cut us in half "once more" so that we resemble the stele modeled by the sculptor. Rather, through the fabrication of this god and his promise

of future happiness, the poet intervenes in the phantom realm of the soul and its passions in order to replace, or at least mitigate, an empty fear with an empty hope. He does this by tinkering with the pious expectations in regard to the future that are the proximate cause of these passions. But these expectations are, in their turn, grounded in the images of the divine in its relation to the human, that is, in images of a providential order. It is through altering the latter, therefore—or through making room for the philanthropic god of the poet alongside the punitive gods of the city—that the poet replaces one impossible expectation with another and thereby alters the passions that follow in their wake. He replaces false pains with false pleasures in the souls of the pious.[23] But, if the false pains with which he deals are identical with the "fear of the lord" in conflict with antinomian eros, and the latter defines the discordant structure of the soul that is the source of the self and self-awareness, Aristophanes now implicitly draws the conclusion that self-awareness as such is painful. He understands the therapeutic task of the poet, therefore, to be that of slackening this tension and instilling, insofar as possible, a novel harmony within the soul through the falsehoods of poetry. The poet, in effect, administers a narcotic in speech that unstrings the sinews of the soul and dulls the sharpness, and discomfort, of self-awareness. In other words, he allows us to enjoy a small measure of the "fulfillment" for which we long—namely, the elimination of the soul—through the hopeful anticipation of the complete annihilation of the soul that human beings in their ignorance and perplexity identify with what is most their own and the acquisition of which they call "happiness." He artfully combines the soul and self-awareness with the dissolution of the soul and self-oblivion. Through the psychogogic power of poetry, Aristophanes performs on the level of the soul what Eryximachus pretended to perform on the level of body. Of course, he makes no claim to be able to combine doses of self-erasure with the immortality of the soul. Indeed, he does not even claim to instill health in the soul. He is rather a dope-pusher than a doctor.

If the tension between Zeus and Eros reflects the tension within the soul itself, then in easing the latter, Aristophanes must, despite the militancy of the beginning of his speech, also make peace prevail, or at least broker a truce, between the gods. Accordingly, by the end of his speech, it has become clear that Eros is to operate to improve our lot strictly within the bounds of traditional piety based upon the primacy of the gods of the law (193a–b). Piety can be alleviated only through further piety; our disorder can be treated only with further disorder (189a).[24] Through the argument of his speech, then, Aristophanes articulates what he takes to be the ground for the failure of Pausanians' and Eryximachus' speeches, according to which the city is capable of providing a solution to the human problem. The city is the primary cause of the "suffering of our nature" and can never be

restructured in such a way as to become the vehicle of our cure. On the one hand, eros can never be made the ground and the final end of the law, as Pausanias had proposed, since it is derivative of the law and yet in essential tension with it. And, on the other hand, the city can never dispense with the law and the gods of the law, as Eryximachus had proposed, since man cannot be man except as subordinate to the law and the gods of the law. Though Aristophanes agrees with Eryximachus that both are evils, unlike Eryximachus he recognizes that they are necessary evils and that human life is founded upon and circumscribed by such necessity. Finally, therefore, Aristophanes, seems to deny Phaedrus' claim that there is a human life that transcends the city and its law. Man is a political animal pure and simple and political enlightenment is out of the question. The gods of the city can never be dispensed with.[25]

The gods of the poets, therefore, must coexist with and accommodate themselves to the gods of the city. Within Aristophanes' speech the latter are represented by Zeus and his son Apollo, the former by Eros, Hephaestus, and Hades. Through this divided pantheon and the relations between its members Aristophanes has given us the wherewithal to understand more precisely what Eryximachus, in offering his solution to the human problem, had attempted to do and why that attempt was necessarily a failure. The doctor believed that he could separate out, as it were, Apollo—the civilizing aspect of the city and its law and the father of Asklepios—from Zeus and join him to Hephaestus—or the power of the arts—in order to expel the brothers Zeus and Hades—the compulsory and the unreal—from political life. He baptized this fusion of Apollo and Hephaestus with the name Asklepios and seemed to identify this healer god with the healthful Eros or the artful power to instill it.

Aristophanes, however, has shown that one cannot possibly separate Zeus from Apollo, or that the "civilizing" aspect of the law is dependent upon its punitive aspect. Theologically speaking, therefore, he argues that to effect a cure of human beings would require the fusion not of Apollo and Hephaestus, but of Hephaestus and Hades, that is, a reengineering of piety, but that such a fusion is nonetheless similarly impossible or available only on the level of poetry. On the level of poetry, therefore, he combines these two gods of the poets and baptizes this fusion with the name Eros. More precisely, he yokes them together and harnesses them to the ends of erotic longing that he then transfigures as a god who represents the promise or hope of the fulfillment of this longing.

Since, however, Hades can neither be severed from his kinship to his brother Zeus, nor expelled from this assemblage, the city cannot be enlightened by poetry anymore than by science. The unreal light that the god Eros provides replaces or rather alleviates the unreal darkness of Zeus, but both merely cover over the "real" and insurmountable darkness of human

existence. Whether Hades is considered as a realm of punishment or one of reward it is still the realm of shadows and gloom and beneath it lays the unrelieved obscurity of Tarteros.

Aristophanes appears to make Hades central to the meaning of what it is to be a god and certainly makes him central to the meaning of the gods of the poets. In doing so, however, he appears, through his silence on the issue, to deny the link that Phaedrus wished to assert between Hades and immortality through reputation or glory. Hades is either the dark and hidden realm of the distinctive experiences of the "separate" soul—shame and terror before the divine—or it is the phantom realm of the impossible union of soul with soul. It is not the repository of the undying images of heroes and demigods.[26] But since Hades and Eros are so closely joined in his speech, Aristophanes implicitly denies that Eros is the root of the love of glory and renown and the desire for immortality. Aristophanes can plausibly deny any such relationship only by abstracting from that aspect of the gods that one might believe to be particularly characteristic of the gods of the poets, namely, their immortal youth and beauty. He never mentions Aphrodite in his speech and never suggests that Eros is her offspring or indeed associated with her in any way. Nor does he declare, as did Hesiod and as will Agathon, that Eros is the most beautiful of the gods. The immortal beauty of the gods—their perfection—does not figure in his speech as an object of erotic desire or emulation. As a consequence, Aristophanes' account of the city is equally silent concerning the peculiar character of Athenian imperialism and the novel brand of "piety" that its ambition appears to embody on the political level: the imitation of the divine.[27] It is rather the tragic poet Agathon who takes up the themes that had been present in Phaedrus' speech—the imitation of god and imperial ambition—and brings them out into the open once more. Accordingly, Agathon makes the beautiful the foremost attribute of his god Eros.

Agathon's understanding of the imitation of the divine, entailing as it does an overturning of the rule of necessity (the empire of Olympian Zeus) and, therefore, an imperialism on a superpolitical scale, resembles so closely the schemes of such Aristophanic characters as Peistheterus and Trygaeus that we may be led to believe that Plato has given us but half the Aristophanic account in Aristophanes' own speech. Agathon's speech might appear, therefore, to be, as it were, a continuation of Aristophanes' account or its "other half."[28] Perhaps it would be better to say that it is its complement insofar as its levity appears as the answer to Aristophanes' gravity and that each, therefore, points to the other as making thematic that from which it itself has abstracted.

SIX

AGATHON: EROS, SOUL, AND RHETORIC

A dialogue between Socrates and Agathon forms both the bridge between Aristophanes' and Agathon's speeches (193e–194d) and the introduction to Socrates' speech (199c–201d). Agathon is the only person at the banquet with whom Socrates practices his art of conversation and he does so twice. Through this double pairing he apparently wishes to make clear that though Agathon is most obviously linked to his fellow poet Aristophanes, he can be properly understood only when coupled with the philosopher. We are invited to conclude, therefore, that the ultimate issue that Agathon's speech will raise is that of the role of the beautiful in relation to Socrates' erotics. As we will see, Socrates will understand Agathon to be not Aristophanes' "other half," therefore, but his own errant shadow or the sophist as the phantom image of the philosopher (198c).[1]

The first exchange between Socrates and Agathon takes as its subject matter the links between self-awareness, shame, and fear. Aristophanes argued for the inseparability of shame and self-awareness and, like Phaedrus, tied shame to eros. Expanding upon Phaedrus' suggestion, however, he argued that it was precisely the divided or factionalized structure of soul—having its ground in the city and its law—in which both shame and self-awareness are alive. In his dialogue with Agathon, Socrates is at one and the same time exploring the character of the self-awareness instilled by law and preparing the ground for the separation of eros from shame. He somehow detects in advance that Agathon's speech will prove to be the key to a correction of Aristophanes' psychology such that this separation will be made possible and the way cleared for his own understanding of eros as an awareness of defectiveness and need that is free of shame.

In apparent agreement with Aristophanes, Socrates' interrogation of Agathon locates the origin of shame in fear (194b–c). Here, however, it is a question not of the fear of divine punishment, but of falling short of the

standard of the divine—namely, wisdom—in one's own person. Both species of fear are elicited by god as a measure. In the former, however, it is a measure to which one submits, in the latter a measure to which one aspires.

Socrates begins his interrogation of Agathon by fastening upon his assertion that, in confessing his fear that he will be completely perplexed by the time Agathon has finished speaking, Socrates is really attempting to enchant or "drug" him so that he will fail to meet the expectations of his "spectators" (194a). Socrates makes Agathon's shame and fear before his audience (or his lack of them) the topic of conversation. What Agathon immediately reveals under Socrates' probing is that, despite his insistence to the contrary, he is so wrapped up with the theater that this small private gathering appears to him to be a crowd before which he is performing. Agathon is always on stage and, therefore, always under the gaze of an unspecified "other" whose admiration and approval he is compelled to seek.

Socrates assures Agathon that he could hardly have had the designs he attributes to him in mind and in doing so denies that the "few" who are present on this occasion are equivalent in their power to inspire terror to the multitude of spectators before whom Agathon showed his courage and "great-mindedness" (*megalophrosunen*) the day before (194b). Agathon has nothing to fear from this small collection of friends. Agathon insists that he is in no need of Socrates' correction and denies that he was "ignorant" (*agnoein*) of the fact that his guests do not constitute a crowd of spectators despite his having called them precisely that. He, however, corrects Socrates in asserting that a few men with mind are more inspiring of fear than a multitude of fools (194b). Thus, he declares that he is afraid of appearing ignorant before both the many and the few—though he has more to fear from the latter—while at the same time denying that Socrates has revealed him to be ignorant of something that all wise men should know. On the contrary, it is he who has shown Socrates to be lacking in knowledge.

Socrates, however, interprets Agathon's remark in such a way as to construe him to suggest that, though he "thinks more" of those whom he believes to be wise than of the many, he does not number any of the present company among the former, but in the last analysis lumps them together with the "multitude of fools" who were present at his dramatic victory (194c). They may be few in number, but they are not to be numbered among the few who are wise. Among Agathon's guests are the two wisest men in Athens, a city that has the greatest reputation for wisdom in the world.[2] According to Socrates' suggestion, Agathon believes himself to be the wisest human being simply. The "others" or the wise few whom Agathon might meet can, therefore, only be the gods. After agreeing, remarkably enough, with all that Socrates has said and implied (194c), Agathon also agrees that he might indeed feel shame before these wise few if he were "doing (making) something shameful (ugly)" (194c). Agathon would feel shame, presumably,

if a god were to show him up as ignorant and perplexed. When Socrates suggests, therefore, that before the multitude he would feel no shame if he were "doing (making) something shameful (ugly)" (194d), he must mean to imply that Agathon is shameless in his willingness to fabricate and display before the crowd a simulacrum of himself as possessing a wisdom he lacks. On account of a shame before the wise god whose reality can never be confirmed, Agathon is compelled "shamelessly," that is, falsely, to identify himself with a false (and, therefore, ugly) image of the beautiful: an unreal wisdom. His shame in regard to his own defectiveness leads him to impersonate the shamelessness of perfection and thereby mire himself in a triple-layered unreality.

Since Agathon's understanding of the divine and the ugly or shameful are perfectly conventional, however, he aspires as a consequence to conform himself in his appearance to a standard that is identical to the opinion of the multitude about what constitutes wisdom. The truth about Agathon, therefore, is not his shamelessness, but his shame before, and conformity to, conventional opinion, that is, his shame before the multitude. He will make clear in his speech that this shame is rooted in a fear that beyond the measure of conventional opinion and the approbation of the many he is nothing or a fear of nonexistence. In an attempt to reassure himself in regard to his own existence, Agathon does everything in his power to reduce himself to a false appearance before a multitude of fools.

The exchange between Agathon and Socrates is cut short by Phaedrus who comes to Agathon's rescue and insists that both of them pay their debt of speech to the god Eros (194d). Socrates seems to have been more than willing to allow his *dialegesthai* to supersede their anticipated eulogies. Absent Phaedrus' intervention, therefore, Socrates would have given a display in deed of how Agathon and Socrates are properly paired and what his own knowledge of erotics amounts to. Given that his first choice has been ruled out, Socrates is confronted with the problem of how he can present his understanding of eros—which centers around his erotics—and his refutation of Agathon—which requires his usual way of question and answer—in an anerotic and monologic mode.

It is at this juncture that, precisely as Plato indicated he would at the opening of the dialogue, Homer comes to Socrates' aid. Agathon's appeal to Homer's *Iliad* during the course of his speech (195d) will prove to furnish the means to understanding the precise ground of the false character not only of Agathon's, but all the prior accounts of eros, since Agathon's account turns out to be, in the decisive respect, identical to their own. Homer's contributions to his cause, however, will prevent Socrates neither from making a typical "Socratic" examination of Agathon the prelude to his own eulogy of Eros, nor from constructing that eulogy around a "non-Socratic" dialogue—a conversation in which Socrates follows rather than

leads and that consequently assumes a didactic and dogmatic rather than zetetic and aporetic aspect.

Despite his having ruled it out of order, Phaedrus' insight into Socrates and his erotics as characterized by an attraction to beautiful youths and an art of conversation (194d) is accurate and reminds us in a timely way of that from which Aristophanes' speech had abstracted—mind and speech—while at the same time it anticipates Agathon's treatment of these same neglected topics in his discourse. The fact that eros finds its origin in the sight of the beautiful body of the beloved,[3] or in the attraction to an apparently complete and self-sufficient whole, and that intercourse has the double meaning of sexual union and conversation points to mind and speech as originally ingredient in eros. In taking up what Aristophanes had discarded in his treatment of eros, however, Agathon will abstract from that which was central to the comic poet's understanding: necessity and defectiveness. As a consequence, mind will appear in Agathon's speech as exclusively poetic or productive and speech as entirely rhetorical.

Agathon begins his speech with a speech that he declares is not a speech in the proper sense and, therefore, not the true beginning of his speech. He says that first he will speak of how he must speak and then speak (194e). Agathon rejects self-reflective speech as speaking. He makes explicit what was implicit in Aristophanes' speech in its failure to reflect upon the grounds of his own account and, therefore, appears to rule out Socrates examination of the speeches in speech. Socrates' turn to the speeches and his art of conversation is neither first, nor, in the strict sense, speech. His implicit dismissal of Socratic erotics is surprising, however, given the "Socratic" character of this prelude to his speech. For his nonspeech about speech is devoted to establishing that what is first is not an account in terms of cause, but the inquiry into what something is (195a). The essentially un-Socratic character of his superficially Socratic position, however, is made clear by his confidence in the ease with which these two sorts of account—causal and eidetic—may be joined. Socrates himself at the end of his life seems to suggest that he has never successfully combined these two forms of account.[4] Agathon, however, insists that what one has separated, one may just as easily combine. Speech is not essentially reflective because it is perfectly subject to the stipulations of the will. Speech reveals not necessity, but the lack of it. Collection and division, therefore, could never be revelatory of the true and the real, but only of the willful artistry of the speaker.

The true beginning of Agathon's speech is a transgression of sacred law—*qui s'excuse, s'accuse*: Agathon says that, "if sacred law allows it," he will declare Eros to be the happiest of the gods because he is at once most beautiful and best (195a). Eros is happier, that is, than any of the Olympians, Zeus included. What was an impassable obstacle in Aristophanes, Agathon

circumvents without exertion. Eros is the beautiful. He is "best" or preeminent among gods insofar as he is *the* cause of the good (195a). Agathon orders his speech around this difference and endues it with a symmetrical structure that mirrors it: its first half details the beauty of the god through an inventory of the four attributes Agathon believes to be essential to it (195a–196b); and its second half identifies the good of which the god is the cause with the four primary virtues—justice, moderation, courage, and wisdom (196b–197b). Agathon is thus the first speaker since Phaedrus to distinguish the beautiful and the good and he makes explicit what Phaedrus left implicit. Neither in the case of the beautiful, nor that of the good, however, does he attempt to explain how the four members of each series form a single whole, that is, he gives no account of the principle of their unity. He seems to understand Eros itself as unifying the fragmentary aspects of the beautiful and the plurality of the virtues; on the contrary, however, he rather dissolves Eros into the series of its unrelated aspects and effects. The apparent lucidity and intelligibility of Agathon's account, as suggested by the symmetry and orderliness or the "beauty" of its structure, are illusory.

At the head of the quartet of attributes composing the beauty of the god Agathon places his youthfulness (195a). He thereby appears to call Phaedrus' bluff and come clean in regard to that which Phaedrus preferred prudently to conceal, namely, that Eros is not the oldest, but the youngest of the gods. Agathon appeals to Phaedrus at the opening and the closing of his speech (195a, 197e) and, at one point, declares that he agrees with much—though not all—of what Phaedrus had said (195b). One is tempted to understand Agathon's speech as a recapitulation of Phaedrus' account in the light of Aristophanes' "correction" of the latter, that is, his claim that there is no reality to a specifically human good that transcends the limitations of the city and his corollary proposition that the specifically human is "grounded" in nonbeing. Agathon, precisely on the basis of his embracing the Aristophanic "insight" into the unreality of everything we take to be most real—for example, our very selves—argues that our humanity, and therefore the limitations of political life, may be transcended in the direction of a superpolitical and superhuman good. This good, however, will turn out to be identical to the beautiful. Dispensing with the real as the ground of the distinction between the good and the beautiful ultimately entails dispensing with that distinction. The unreal good is simply the beautiful.

Agathon's first "proof" regarding the youth of Eros is that Eros is always "with and of the young" and that, therefore, he himself is necessarily young (195b). Agathon's whole conception of Eros is based upon the identification of Eros with that which it desires. This collapse obviously lacks logical necessity. It is, rather, rooted in a kind of psychological necessity—personification and idealism. These are the proclivities of the human soul that the poet encourages and exploits as the props for the poetic slight of hand through

which the truth of human defectiveness is transformed through speech into the perfection of the beautiful god of love.

Agathon's argument appears to deny that pederasty is an expression of Eros: if the principle of erotic attraction is like to like and Eros is always of and for the young, then the erotic relationship is reserved for the youthful in their intercourse with one another. Whatever the ties that bind Agathon to Pausanias they are not erotic in character. Pausanias may have been, as he has implicitly claimed, Agathon's instructor in virtue, but Agathon denies that there is anything erotic to be found in such an association. One wonders, however, how Agathon can then argue in the second half of his speech that Eros instills the virtues of justice, moderation, courage, and wisdom. Can there be anything erotic about Agathon's Eros?

If Agathon's argument is a rather weak demonstration of the youth of the god Eros, it is in no way a demonstration that Eros is the youngest of the gods. This argument is made, rather, on the basis of an appeal to the very authorities upon whom Phaedrus relied to demonstrate the antiquity of the god: if the events of which Parmenides and Hesiod speak are indeed true—the "parricide" and incest among the first generations of the gods—this, proclaims Agathon, belongs rather to the ancient reign of necessity than the present time in which Eros has become king (195c). For from the moment that Eros assumed the throne, all acts of violence among the gods ceased and were superseded by friendship and peace (195b–c). According to Agathon, Eros is the source of neither pederastic desire, nor the crimes of Oedipus and, contrary to the claims of both Eryximachus and Aristophanes, he denies that it is essentially antinomian in character. Eros, in his view, is not essentially opposed to anything, because no necessity—natural or conventional—has the capacity to limit the power of the god. According to Agathon, Eros as the beautiful is the principle of a liberation from all necessity. Yet Eros' overturning of the reign of necessity is identical with his overturning of the reign of Zeus or the punishing gods of conventional justice (195c; 196b–c).[5] How, then, can the ends of Eros not be understood as primarily antinomian in character?

Eros' usurpation of the throne of Zeus appears, at first sight, to be incompatible with Agathon's claim that the "bindings and castrations" among the gods have come to an end precisely through this usurpation: is not Eros' successful rebellion against Father Zeus a case in point? To avoid this paradox, Agathon must understand Eros to have overturned Zeus' rule without a shot fired or a blow struck. Through the art of instilling friendship or peace, therefore, Eros has conquered Zeus. The power of persuasive speech is capable of dispensing with the limitations of necessity. But if the liberation from necessity is the distinguishing trait of the beauty of the god, then the unlimited power of persuasive speech is the efficient cause of what Eros is essentially. If Eros himself, however, is the embodiment of this power

of persuasion, then he is, through his speech, the efficient cause of his own godhead. What Eros is is brought into being by the power of Eros. Eros is self-caused. He is the realization of the wildest dreams of Oedipus.

Agathon's argument that the monarchy of the youngest of the gods has effectively eliminated what he takes to be the worst evils among gods and men implies a doctrine of progress.[6] Unlike Phaedrus, who, however mendaciously, appeals to the traditional principle of the equivalence of the old and the good, Agathon argues openly for the superiority of the most recent. In this he takes the innovating spirit and sophistication of the Athenians to their logical extreme: the ancestral and in particular the ancestral gods are identified with brutality and barbarism. At the beginning stands the age of iron and the golden age is the final fruit of time in its unfolding.

In turning from the youth of the god to his "tenderness" as the second aspect of his beauty, however, Agathon appears to violate the principle he has just established, for he seems to grant the superiority of Homer's poetic capacity to his own, or of the oldest of the poets to that of the youngest (195c–d). He not only defers to Homer, however—he corrects him. If the tenderness of Eros is to be shown by borrowing Homer's conceit regarding the softness of the feet of Ate or Delusion, Agathon nonetheless insists that to walk on the heads of men, rather than the earth, is not a sufficient sign of the softness of anything, since the skulls of men are hard (195e). Eros, he therefore insists, not only walks upon, but has established his dwelling within "the softest of beings"—the soul (195e). According to Agathon's correction of Homer, then, body, as defined by obduracy and resistance, is not soft. Rather the soul, as lacking the resistance definitive of body and its limits, is the paradigm of softness. For the soul to be truly soft or perfectly yielding, then, would require that the soul be entirely separate from the body. The softness of Eros is demonstrated by his having established his dwelling in the soul as separate from body. Eros' miraculous persuasive power, through which all the limitations of necessity are transcended, would, therefore, appear to depend upon the possibility of a real distinction and separation between body and soul. Agathon's erotic rhetoric would be properly effective only in Aristophanes' Hades. Be that as it may, Agathon now concedes that soul as such is not necessarily soft. Some souls—the savage and harsh—are immune to the charms of Eros and can never be made the suitable dwelling place for the god, that is, his powers of persuasion cannot be effective in such cases (195e). How, then, can it be that Eros has actually overcome the reign of necessity if there are great numbers of unyielding men whom Eros can never pacify? Moreover, as Agathon describes Eros dwelling in the soul and wallowing in the softest of the soft, the god suddenly takes on feet and "every other part," that is, an entire body.[7] Through caressing and being caressed by the soft, the god has suddenly become hard (195e). He participates in the unyielding character that is distinctive of both body and "hard" souls.

The undisclosed cause of the incoherence of Agathon's claims in regard to Eros is immediately revealed when one turns, as Plato expects his reader to do, to the passage in Homer from which Agathon's metaphor regarding the ostensible softness of Eros is drawn, namely, Book Nineteen of the *Iliad*. Here Homer recounts the reconciliation effected between Achilles and Agamemnon in the wake of the death of Patroclus. After Achilles has offered his brief recantation in which he attributes the disasters that have befallen the Greeks to "*thumos* in our breasts" (66), Agamemnon offers a long-winded self-justification in which he denies all responsibility for what has occurred and instead attributes his catastrophes first to Zeus and then Moira and Erinys who, he says, "caught his mind in savage delusion" (85–90). Finally he proceeds to personify and divinize this delusion in a fable through which he intends to compare himself as king among men to the king of the gods. It is at the very opening of this story that the lines that Agathon borrows are to be found. In these lines Agamemnon transforms delusion from a defective condition of the human mind into the "accursed" "eldest daughter of Zeus, whose feet are tender," etc. (91–95).

The story is meant by Agamemnon to show that, if even Zeus could not prevent himself from being "led astray" by Ate or Delusion, one can hardly blame a mortal monarch for a similar failure. What Homer shows through the story, however, is how, in the "anger of his mind," Zeus personifies the delusion of his mind (121–31) or how, through the deluding agency of anger, delusion is separated from that same anger of which it is an effect and transformed into an independent being (the goddess Ate) that is said to be the true cause of the mind's delusion.

Immediately following the reconciliation between himself and Agamemnon, Achilles wishes, without further ceremony, to drive the Argives into battle (148–49). It is Odysseus who must remind him that no matter how "eager for battle" one's *thumos* may be, if one neglects to assuage the hunger of the body, one's "limbs will grow heavy" and one's "knees will be hampered" (155–66). Achilles grudgingly agrees to follow the advice of the "many-minded" (*polumetis*) Odysseus, who insists that, though Achilles is his superior in battle, he is by far Achilles' superior in knowledge (215–19). He, therefore, waits while the Argives eat and drink—though he confesses that he longs to drive them into battle "starving and unfed." He vows, however, that he himself will refrain from food or drink until he has "paid back the outrage." Until then he will feast only on "blood and slaughter" (205–14). In the eagerness of his *thumos* to take revenge Achilles denies the material preconditions of his own existence, namely, body.[8] If it were not for the miraculous intervention of Zeus and Athena (340–56), Achilles' *thumos* would have eliminated the preconditions of its own act of vengeance in a self-destructive insistence on its own independence from bodily necessity.

What the context surrounding the lines from Homer that Agathon employs shows us, therefore, is that the root of personification and the idealism dependent upon it—which his speech exploits to full advantage in his creation of the novel god Eros—is to be found in anger or *thumos*. The ground for this personification appears, from Homer's account, to be the tendency of *thumos* to split itself into "itself" and an alien other and, on the basis of this division, to proceed to identify "itself" with the self simply and the "other" with that which is not only alien, but hostile and opposed to this specious self. In doing so, *thumos* appears to exploit a possibility latent in language, namely, the substantizing of a quality: *thumos* is "poetic" in this sense or, more precisely, "rhetorical."[9] It is in this poetic or rhetorical mode that *thumos* works to break the original whole and the various related aspects of that whole into a collection of discrete elements or a series of self-subsisting beings.

In the light of Homer's analysis, then, we may see in Agathon's effort to overcome all limitations of necessity, not the workings of eros, but the ambitions of *thumos*. The self-diremption in which a specious self is opposed to an "other" that is in fact merely a projection of this same "self" can be seen in Agathon's claim that Eros is inharmoniously "at war" with all that is inharmonious or at war with being at war (196a). Such antagonism toward the "other," therefore, is a self-assertion that is identical to self-cancellation or, speaking logically, a self-contradiction. Eros' *eidos* is "fluid" (196a)—that is, his form is to be formless—and his complexion is perpetually "blooming" (196b) insofar as *thumos* is always erasing itself and remaking itself in an ever renewed effort to distinguish itself from an ostensible other into which it is perpetually collapsing.

Moreover, any limitation upon *thumos* that is something other than a phantom version of itself it naturally rejects as well and attempts to transcend in its specious self-assertion: *thumos'* desire for radical independence is reflected not only in Agathon's claim that the erotic soul is "soft" or unencumbered by the limitations of bodily necessity, "fluid" or lacking any determinate structure of its own and above all self-caused, it is also expressed in the first of the goods of which Eros is the cause and the "greatest" of his attributes (196b): justice.

If the first part of Agathon's speech, devoted to the beauty of Eros, displays *thumos* as the truth of the god's striving to dissolve the political structure of the soul, the second half demonstrates that *thumos* is at the root of the articulation of that same structure. Here Agathon turns from the beauty to the goodness of Eros (196b). His guiding claim is that Eros' goodness is made manifest in his acting as the cause of the plurality of the virtues. At the same time, he describes all of these virtues as perfections of Eros. If, however, behind Agathon's "Eros" is Homer's *thumos*, then the truth

of Agathon's claim appears to be that the moral virtues of justice, moderation, courage, and wisdom are nothing but the various modifications of the single passion of anger. That is, the moral virtues are not, as is commonly assumed, the perfections of various parts of the soul—for example, wisdom of mind or moderation of desire—but the "perfections" of one and the same passion that, in each of these instances, puts itself forward as a separate faculty of soul. The unity and wholeness of the soul are fragmented into a series of discrete parts and the whole of virtue into a series of separate virtues by the "poetic" operations of *thumos*.

Agathon appears to understand the justice of Eros in an entirely negative way: it amounts to nothing more than the fact that the god neither commits injustice nor suffers injustice in his relations with gods and men (196b–c). According to Agathon, committing injustice is equivalent to acting with violence and suffering injustice to being acted upon by violence (196b–c). Amazingly enough, he appeals to "the kingly laws of the city" as support for this view (196c). Eros' capacity to affect others without violence turns out to be merely the periphery of his justice, however. Its core is his own immunity from suffering violence or, indeed, from being affected in any way at all. Eros "minds his own business" in sublime independence and self-sufficiency. If he is an "unmoved mover" from the point of view of those whom he moves, from his own perspective this relationship is a matter of complete indifference. Eros is not altruistic by intention. He acts "at a distance" and as a final cause. He is the beautiful that causes motion without itself being moved. As far as the virtue of justice goes, therefore, Eros' goodness and his beauty appear to be convertible.

When Agathon turns to the moderation and courage of Eros (196c–d), however, Eros suddenly goes from being the unmoved and final, to the moving and efficient cause of motion or from the object of desire to desire itself. Through this transformation, the character of his rule alters as well: now his sovereignty appears to savor of compulsion and violence—Agathon employs the verb *krattein* to describe Eros' rule (196c) and thereby introduces into the argument its overtones of domination and mastery. In describing his moderation Agathon employs the common opinion that moderation consists in "dominating over pleasures and desires" (196c)—the moderate man, in this view, is the enkratic man, the man who is "master of himself" or "stronger than himself." Agathon's peculiar take on the enkratic soul, however, is that since all desires and pleasures are weaker next to the desires and pleasures of Eros, Eros, as stronger than or mastering of these other pleasures, is exceptionally moderate (196c). Agathon's account of the soul dominated by Eros is a peculiar parody of the single-mindedness of the life devoted to philosophical eros. Instead of providing for the unity of soul, however, Agathon's domineering Eros establishes the conventional or political structure of soul in which faction between opposing parts prevails. Eros

as the desire for pleasure, therefore, is a thumotic version of Eros, which splits itself into "the desire for pleasure," in the "low" sense, and the desire for pleasure in the "noble" sense—that is, the desire for the pleasure of approbation and praise—and vanquishes itself in its conformity to "demotic virtue," that is, by means of a hedonistic calculus.[10] As such, it plays both ruler and ruled or master and slave, that is, it is not only "stronger than itself," but "weaker than itself," as Socrates notes with some amusement in the *Republic* (430e–431a). By these means, however, "Eros" is infected with both suffering and a dependency upon a multitude of others from whom it seeks a confirmation of its virtuous condition.

This peculiar state of affairs prevails on a broader level in regard to the courage of Eros as Agathon understands it. For Eros to be endowed with the attribute of courage requires, it would seem, that the god relinquish his independent divinity in order to become a mere attribute of the god who ought to be the polar opposite of Eros, but is, given the Homeric truth of Agathon's god, in fact his twin, namely, the god of war. Agathon insists that it is not Ares who has or possesses Eros, but Eros who possesses Ares by inhabiting and animating the god insofar as Ares in his desire for Aphrodite is mastered and dominated by Eros (196c–d). Eros thus becomes the animating passion of the god of war in his lust for the goddess who momentarily takes over from Eros as the divine embodiment of the beautiful. "Eros" is, it would seem, both the longing for the ideal of perfection and the embodiment of that ideal, that is to say, *thumos* strives for an end that is a projection of its own devising: the beautiful understood as the perfect and self-sufficient. Once again, therefore, *thumos* splits itself in two in order to establish a relation of ruler and ruled. Now, however, rather than distinguishing between a "virtuous" and a "nonvirtuous" desire for pleasure, the broader distinction between the object of desire and desire is posited and Eros strives to attain to a phantom of which it is the ultimate source. *Thumos*, as affected by or suffering injustice, that is, violence (and, therefore, as weak), posits the ideal of a being immune to such suffering (viz., a self-caused god) and takes this as the measure toward which it aspires and before which it perpetually falls short. The closest it appears to come to the lack of affection it imagines and admires is the self-affection it produces on the basis of its own hallucinations.

Justice is, therefore, "the greatest thing" in regard to the virtues of the god (196b) because it most of all reveals the psychological root of those virtues and the structure of soul to which they belong. Eros' subjection of desire as weaker than itself and its projection of self-sufficiency as an ideal is rooted in the thumotic response to a certain experience of necessity and dependency and the interpretation of that experience in terms of right and the violation of right. Aristophanes was correct to locate the ground of the conventional structure of soul in the violence of political necessity. He was

wrong only to understand this structure to be articulated through erotic longing. He failed to distinguish sufficiently between eros and *thumos* in the constitution of the human soul. Through Agathon's attempt to correct him and supercede his authority, Homer has entered the argument in such a way as to show the crucial error at the heart of both Agathon's and Aristophanes' accounts of eros (and, by implication, those of all the other speakers). Fighting as Socrates' ally in his contest with the tragic and comic poets, Homer has softened up their positions in advance of Socrates' counterattack.

When Agathon goes on to identify the source and peak of the god's self-sufficiency with wisdom and productive mind (196d–e) we recognize that he has articulated his own "poetic" version of the just structure of soul from Book Four of the *Republic*. Plato appears, therefore, to have used Aristophanes' account to correct Agathons' psychology and the truth of Agathon's psychology to correct Aristophanes' account: once the comic poet's political necessity is reinstated into Agathon's speech, what both have called "Eros" reveals itself to be eros confused with *thumos* and in the light of this fact, Aristophanes' divided soul reveals itself as rooted in *thumos*. It is, therefore, not eros, but *thumos* through which the internalization of the law is accomplished. However, if the articulation of the lawful virtues as a series of discrete beings is the result of the poetic-constructive power of *thumos*, then the law not only finds an ally, but a partial source in *thumos*: calculation is never solely at the origin of the law. The law and *thumos* appear to be equipollent and the lawful structure of soul is an essential not an accidental concomitant of the law, as Aristophanes had assumed. Homer has given us the key to understanding the truth of Aristophanes' psychology.

What Agathon's employment of Homer has revealed, however, is that the antinomian impetus that Aristophanes attributed to Eros is in fact a manifestation of the necessarily self-contradictory character of *thumos'* self-assertion. The latter acts both as the psychological principle whereby the structure of the soul is given articulation and as an agent whereby the boundaries of this structure are dissolved. *Thumos* both constructs and identifies itself with this structure and sacrifices itself in its rejection of it as a limitation on its self-assertion. *Thumos* is suicidal at its core. This means that the eidetic divisions it establishes, it at the same time transgresses, appearing now on one side of the divide, now on another. It does this, however, not according to the stipulations of its will, but according to a determining necessity of which it is itself unaware. *Thumos* thus impersonates eros in its overcoming of the lawful structure of soul—as Agathon "impersonates" Socrates—but in so doing, severs the link between the overcoming of the lawful structure of soul and the real that, as Socrates will show, eros provides through perplexity or knowledge of ignorance. Aristophanes' failure to distinguish between eros and *thumos* proves to be the basis for his claim that eros can never return us to the reality of what is our own.

At the end of his speech, Agathon will identify the makings of Eros with his wisdom. Given that behind Agathon's Eros lies *thumos*, Plato seems thereby to indicate that from the beginning the law and the thumoeidetic structure of the soul make a bid to associate themselves with reason. To effect this association, however, reason must be understood as the rational will or commanding reason: reason and the law are identified. One cannot treat, therefore, the question of law and soul apart from the issue of mind and speech, as Aristophanes had attempted to do. He wished to interpret law primarily in terms of the irrational force through which it compels obedience. He, therefore, ignored the fact that the law is itself a speech that makes a claim to represent the truth or that it works as much through persuasion or the establishing of conviction and belief as it does through mute compulsion. Human existence, he appeared to claim, is at bottom silent and violent and what we call mind is derivative of that which is mindless. As soon as persuasion and belief, however, are admitted alongside compulsion as aspects of the law, then the conventional structure of the soul and the passions attached to it (e.g., shame) must be recognized as having their corollary in lawful opinion that is not merely an epiphenomenal expression of this structure and these passions, but their cause. In fact, Aristophanes himself had demonstrated the causal power that speech possesses in relation to soul through his attempt to influence the condition of human beings, in no matter how limited a fashion, through the psychogogic power of his art. He fabricated Eros as the god of love and hope. But if law, like poetry, works upon the soul from the beginning through persuasive speech and attempts to establish therein a conviction in regard to its truth, then both mind and soul, as distinct from body, are presupposed rather than brought into being by the law, as Aristophanes had claimed. This indicates, however, that mind does not originally or essentially have shame as its companion.

In the final section of his speech, Agathon indulges in his own version of the poetic production of a god and in doing so gives us his parting insight into the attribute of the gods of the poets from which Aristophanes had abstracted: the beautiful. At the same time and in accordance with the operations of his "Eros," he dissolves the greatest of the eidetic divisions that his speech was supposed to establish, that between the beautiful and the good. The beauty of the gods entails the identification of the beautiful and the good. Agathon calls this identification and the power to produce it "wisdom."

It is at the beginning of this account of the god's wisdom that Agathon finally lays all his cards on the table by acknowledging that he is taking a page out of Eryximachus' book: just as the god he praised was identical to the science of medicine, so Agathon's god is identical to the art of poetry (196d). But since, according to Agathon, the art of poetry is as "progressive"

as the art of medicine, its current and most avant-garde representative is, properly speaking, its true or complete representative. Agathon embodies the art of poetry in its perfection and, therefore, the god Eros, since, according to Agathon, the god is not only a poet, but a "poet (maker) of such great wisdom that he can make others poets (makers) as well" (196e).

Because the poet's art possesses this power, he is the cause of the coming to be of all the other arts (197a–b). It is poetry—not, as Eryximachus had claimed, the science of medicine—that is the art of arts, insofar as it has brought all the other arts—including the art of medicine—into being through the "love of beauty" that it instills (197b). For the poet is responsible for making "conspicuous and renowned" the inventors of the arts: he beautifies these inventors by transfiguring them—they are made gods through the transformative power of poetic speech (197a–b). The city of arts, as well as the ruling art that pilots the city (197b), spring into being, therefore, through a competition among its citizens to receive the guerdon that the poet alone can offer: apotheosis. It is thanks to the poet-god that the city of arts has come into being and through the arts that the city has overcome the reign of necessity (197b): merely through his beautifying speech, the poet-god has fashioned the self-sufficient city.

According to Agathon, the city of arts not only has as its end, but its origin in a liberation from necessity. It is grounded not in need, as Socrates argues in the *Republic* (369b–d), but in the striving to realize the poet's image of superpolitical and superhuman self-sufficiency. The reality of the political, therefore, finds its source in nonbeing, that is, the real is founded upon the unreal. If, as we have observed, however, this divine self-sufficiency is simply a projection of spiritedness or anger, then the poetic phantom of self-sufficiency presupposes first and foremost the political notion of right and the violation of right as its cause and not the artifices of the poet. Contrary to his own intention, Agathon has grounded the city of arts not in the art of arts, but the city of law. Far from rooting the city in a liberation from the "kingship of necessity," he has rooted it in the low political necessity at the core of the "kingly law." Both Aristophanes and Agathon, therefore, discount the arts as a foundation of the city. Only given this precondition can both claim that the political is essentially divorced from any relation to the real.

If one takes Agathon's argument at face value, it appears to put his own poetic art at a disadvantage. For if the god Eros is identical to the poet who is the maker of the Olympian gods, this seems to force us to conclude that not Agathon, but Homer, as the maker of the gods of the Greeks,[11] is the poet lurking behind the divinity of Eros. Homer is the first cause of Greek civilization and his poetic nonbeings the foundation of Greek political life. Agathon, however, must understand himself to have the advantage over Homer in two respects. First, he must believe that he understands Homer's

capacity as a maker better than Homer did himself. This understanding is the fruit of time or of historical progress—only after Greek civilization has come to its full flowering in the wisdom and power of Athens and her empire can the extent of Homer's efficacy as poet be assessed. Thus, Homer, unlike Agathon, could not have a genuine or concrete insight into the extent to which the city finds its ground in the gods of the poet or the "reality" of human life in the unreal. Second, however, and precisely on the basis of his superior insight, Agathon is able to perform a feat of which Homer never dreamed. Because of his ostensible insight into nonbeing as the ground of the human, Agathon is able to turn his poetic powers upon himself and remake himself in speech.

At first sight and in the light of an anticipation of what Socrates' Diotima will argue in the second half of her speech, we might understand Agathon's poetic self-transformation in the following terms. The poet who is the embodiment of "Eros" transforms himself into a self-celebrating "song," that is, "Agathon" becomes the name of the poetry into which the poet has converted himself. By these means the poet at the peak of the full flowering of Greek civilization—its final cause—liberates himself from his time and his place and all of their particular constraints: he becomes "eternal" and as an "immortal" being affects others through the power of the speeches to which he has become identical, without himself being affected in any way. At the same time this immortal speech has been completely separated from the bodily conditions of speech—tongue, breath, air, and so on. The "poet-god" in his "collected works" has transformed himself into separate or disembodied soul and mind through the power of the art of writing. While standing at the peak of Athens and her empire, he extends her dominion as his own through the centuries and beyond all geographical barriers. Agathon is to Athens as Jesus is to Rome: both claim to be the "spiritualization" of universal empire.

The success of Agathon's enterprise, however, depends entirely upon the reception of the speeches of Agathon: without an audience Agathon declines into nonexistence. Behind Agathon's celebration of unreality, therefore, lies a terror in the face of his own nullity that he seeks to assuage by rendering "eternal" his appearance before the eyes of his spectators or by establishing in their minds the false, though unshakable, conviction that he is a god. Far from having attained a divine self-sufficiency and liberated himself from all passivity, Agathon has converted himself into the creature of the whims of the multitude. For Agathon to realize his dream of identifying himself with a power to affect without being affected in any way, this power would have to be not that of a separate soul and mind, but of a perfectly beautiful, insensitive, and incorruptible body: an eternal statue. The truth of Agathon's perfectly soft is the impenetrably hard, the truth of his soul, body, and the truth of his god, a stone.[12] What Agathon

takes to be transcendently unreal proves to be identical, therefore, to what Aristophanes understands to be the transcendentally and inaccessibly real. Together Aristophanes' and Agathon's speeches show that the existence of soul is incompatible with completeness or perfect self-sufficiency.

Originally Agathon had made a division between the beautiful and the good and identified the former with what the god is and the latter with what he causes (195a). His account of the good as caused by the beautiful, however, was broken into the seemingly unrelated series of the cardinal virtues. We have now arrived at the peak of those virtues, wisdom, which turns out to be identical to the god's power through the art of making to make other's makers by making them gods. That power finds its culmination, however, in the poet's power to make himself the beautiful god Eros. In the highest instance—the case of the poet himself—it is the good, therefore, that is the cause of the beautiful and not vice versa.[13] In asserting the contrary, what Agathon has done is simply to use the causal power of his poetry (which he calls the good) to make an image in speech of that very causal power of poetry in its perfection. He then attributes the being of the causal power of the good to the image of itself that it has produced and thus claims that the nonbeing of that image is what truly is. This is what he calls the beautiful in the first half of his speech. What Agathon shows, then, is that the beautiful is an image in speech of the good that speciously appropriates to itself the being of the good. Agathon's entire speech is just such an image. His claim, then, that wisdom is the good is the beautiful masquerading as the good. His god Eros in the wisdom of his making is the unreal unity of the beautiful and the good.

Wisdom is, then, a mere image and Agathon's power to make images in ignorance of the grounds of his own making a phantom of Homer's power to make images in full knowledge of the grounds of his own making. Agathon's image of his own image making—his beautiful god—is, therefore, an image of an image of Homer. Far from Agathon representing the progress in wisdom from the time of Homer, he demonstrates the decline from original to image and from being to nonbeing. In this he appears merely to embody the character of the city whose peak he believes himself to be. Athens too is an image of an image of Homer insofar as she strives to identify herself with the perfections of the goddess of Homer after whom she is named and thereby put her own power in the place of the sovereignty of the Olympians.[14] The decline of Homer's wisdom into the city is at the heart of Greek, and that means Athenian, civilization. Agathon's speech, in its relation to that of Aristophanes, has given us the political psychology of these Athenian ambitions: the love of the beautiful in fusion with the love and defense of what one believes to be one's own or the union of eros and *thumos*. Athens at her most refined and cultivated is inseparably joined to Athens the tyrant city. Her desire to embody the truth of the beautiful—to be the

city of wisdom—is combined with her attempt to compel the recognition of her superiority from all other unwise cities. The natural preeminence of wisdom is to be given conventional preeminence of rank. Wisdom and power will meet in one and natural and conventional right will, for the first time, coincide. If the city is "the biggest sophist," as Socrates insists in the *Republic* (492a–d), Athens embodies this truth most fully.

What Agathon's speech makes clear, however, is that this effort is necessarily self-defeating.[15] Agathon's attempt to allow the power of the poet that is responsible for the making of the gods to emerge from its concealment behind these same gods and receive public acknowledgment as first, simply results in the genesis of a novel god whose falsehood is much more complete than that of the Olympians of Homer. Similarly, the enlightenment ambitions of Athens resulted not in the promotion and perfection of Athens the city of poets and philosophers, but a displacement of the gods of the poets and a religious revolution whose ultimate effects are to be found in the novel sect that covered the globe and punctuated the end of the antique world in which poetry and philosophy had found a home.

On the one hand, Socrates himself confirms our reading of Agathon as the image of the image of Homer when, at the close of Agathon's speech, he portrays all of the speakers that have preceded him as shades in Homer's Hades and casts himself in the role of Odysseus (198c). As the last of these shades to appear before Socrates–Odysseus, Agathon takes on the guise of Heracles whose shade is merely an image of the immortal who in turn is an image of Homer's devising.[16] On the other hand, however, Socrates links Agathon to Gorgias through a pun on the Gorgon's head that Odysseus feared Persephone would send against him immediately after his encounter with Heracles. Agathon, according to Socrates, is not primarily a poet, but a sophist. His desire to make wisdom publicly preeminent, therefore, is derivative of his association with sophistry—he is a pupil of Prodicus and an admirer of Protagoras[17]—and his enlightenment schemes the result not simply of the decline of Homer into the public realm, but of pre-Socratic philosophy, as well. Agathon and sophistry in general seek to combine the wisdom of pre-Socratic philosophy with the power to go public of poetry.[18] In this effort, however, philosophy becomes "technology"—as Eryximachus' speech has shown—and poetry rhetoric—as Agathon's speech has shown. The sophist peddles a science of persuasion.[19] Socrates pretends to fear that Agathon–Gorgias–Gorgon might, through his power of speech, "turn him into stone" or convert him into a statue (an image) of himself (198c). Agathon as sophist is an image of Socrates the philosopher[20] and his imitation of mind as wisdom finds its original in Socrates' knowledge of ignorance. Agathon, however, is a sophist who makes the unique claim that Eros is the core of his wisdom and its power. He is a peculiarly Socratic false image of Socrates whose sole expertise is erotics. What is said of Agathon may be

said of Athens: Athens is the city of wisdom that claims that its wisdom and its power find their source in eros as love of the beautiful.[21] Socrates then lives in Athens as in a ghostly realm wherein all the phantoms that appear before him in one way or another falsely reflect his own existence. Athens in its unreality is Homer's Hades and Socrates the reality of Homer's Odysseus in the underworld. Speaking poetically, not Oedipus, but Odysseus is the problematic core of the human as such.

Aristophanes' and Agathon's speeches together appear to represent the *eide* of the just, the beautiful and the good. Aristophanes' speech in taking the law and a political version of what is one's own as its themes points to the just; whereas Agathon's speech explicitly hangs its argument upon the distinction between the beautiful and the good. Agathon himself embodies above all, as he himself wishes to claim, the *eidos* of the beautiful. But then his ambiguous position according to which, on the one hand, he belongs with Aristophanes as his complement and, on the other, with Socrates as his false image seems to indicate the peculiar character of the beautiful as seeming to be paired, on the one hand, with the just over against the good[22] and, on the other, with the good as its apparition and double. The beautiful, as Agathon himself has argued, is particularly fluid, unstable, and difficult to pin down.[23] In spite, or perhaps because of, this, however, it seems to admit of a more direct route to the investigation of the good than does the just. Unlike the just, the beautiful is an object of erotic desire. The beautiful then seems to be immediately linked to Socrates and his erotics in a way that the just could never be. The length and elaborate artificiality of the argument of the *Republic* wherein Socrates demonstrates that the truth of justice is philosophy seem to be an indication of the distance one must travel in order to make this identification.[24] The starting points of this argument have been touched upon in both Aristophanes' and Agathon's speeches. In the *Republic*, on the one hand, Socrates begins with the fact that Aristophanes had denied and Agathon, despite himself, had made clear, namely, that there is a nonaccidental relation between the principle of the conventional structure of soul (*thumos*) and the justice of the law and the political necessity that lies at its root.[25] On the other hand, he shows that the true foundation of the city is not the city of law, but the city of arts and that through the arts the city always retains a connection to a nonpolitical, natural necessity.[26] Though Aristophanes was right to insist that the city cannot be deduced from subpolitical "natural" or material causes, he was wrong to believe that it can be understood without reference to a pre-political necessity that lies at its foundation: not law and punishment are the deepest foundation for the city, but bodily need. Aristophanes wished to represent the low as the key to an understanding of the human. He failed, however, to uncover the truth of the low because he did not look low enough. If he had, he would have been open to the discovery of the link between the low (bodily need)

and the "high" (philosophical perplexity). It is from these starting points that Socrates, in the *Republic*, offers his demonstration, contrary to Aristophanes' arguments here, that the city constitutes an intelligible realm: the city and its limits can be known, because the city is grounded in the pre-political and points beyond itself toward the transpolitical.[27]

If the road from the beautiful and the love of the beautiful to philosophy is shorter and more direct than that from the just, it cannot be simply direct for reasons that have become apparent. Eros as love of the beautiful is always initially presented in alloy with *thumos* and its ambitions. Athens is simply the greatest and most striking example of this fact. To uncover the distinction and relation between the beautiful and the good or the love of the beautiful and Socrates' philosophy seems to require, therefore, the purification of eros.[28] This purification will involve distinguishing the eros of the philosopher from the eros of Athens and the Athenians as original from image.

PART THREE

SOCRATES AND ATHENS

SEVEN

SOCRATES: DAIMONIC EROS

I.

In the preface to his speech Socrates anticipates the distinction he will draw between eros as such or the eros of philosophy and what is ordinarily called eros by making clear the difference between his mode of eulogy and that practiced by all of the other speakers at the banquet. To attribute the "biggest and most beautiful" to eros so that it may "seem to be as beautiful and good as possible" to the minds of those who do not know is, according to Socrates, the rhetorical strategy pursued by all those who have spoken before him (198d–199a). Socrates alone is willing to tell the truth about eros (198d): it is neither wholly beautiful nor entirely good. In their unwillingness to reveal the truth, the previous speakers made evident their opinion that, in the case of eros, praising and telling the truth are incompatible. All of their alleged eulogies were, in fact, so many implicit condemnations.[1] All of them surreptitiously asserted that eros is in fact ugly and bad.[2] Even Socrates, however, does not consider a eulogy of eros to be compatible with a full disclosure of the truth, since a proper eulogy must illuminate only the beautiful truths concerning its subject and even these it must arrange in the most seemly or fitting order (198d), one that is not necessarily identical with the true order. If Socrates' speech is to be distinguished from those of his fellow symposiasts by its truthfulness, he must somehow engineer his account to ensure that the nonbeautiful truths about eros that he refrains from articulating show up through the beautiful truths he displays.

In the light of what follows, it appears that Socrates means to identify attributing "the biggest and most beautiful to Eros" with portraying Eros as a god. Certainly it is the case that all prior speakers took as their starting point, at least, the assumption that Eros is a god. Socrates will explicitly deny that this is so. He will insist that Eros is in fact a "great daimon" (202e). To actually "speak well" about Eros requires the revelation of this

"beautiful truth." What is the nonbeautiful truth lurking behind this revelation? It seems to be in anticipation of this revelation that Socrates undergoes the experience of Pausanias' tyrannicides and Aristophanes' circle men: he is filled with the "big thought" that he will speak well (198d). Socrates implies that his speech will constitute the reality of the assault on the Olympians that Aristophanes' speech portrayed. In praising Eros in accordance with the truth, Socrates' eulogy must bring to light the falsehood or unreality of the gods of the poets. At the beginning of his speech in the *Symposium*, Socrates appears to pick up precisely where he left off in Book Three of the *Republic* in his discussion of the poets and their gods.

That Socrates' speech cannot simply constitute a condemnation of poetry, however, is indicated first of all by Socrates' adoption of a quotation from Euripides even while insisting that he cannot make a speech about Eros after the fashion of the poets—"the tongue promised, but the mind did not" (199a). Moreover, Socrates twice says that he admired and will adopt the structure of Agathon's speech that was articulated around the difference between who or what Eros is and the deeds of Eros (199c, 201d–e). Socrates will also mirror the distinction that Agathon linked to this difference, namely, that between the beautiful and the good: he argues that what Eros is must be understood in terms of the love of the beautiful and the deeds of Eros in terms of the love of the good. Finally, in his speech proper, Socrates will borrow Aristophanes' mythical mode of presentation by splitting himself in two, as it were, so that he may portray the progress of his own reflections as a dialogue between the prophetess Diotima and a younger version of himself. Even while demonstrating the unreality of their gods and apparently attacking their practices, Socrates adopts the mode of presentation native to the poets. Socrates' knowledge of erotics and the poet's art cannot be as separate as Socrates presents them in the explicit arguments of his speech. The most obvious sign of this is the fact that, despite their unreality, Socrates assigns the beautiful gods not to the poets and their making, but to philosophy and its pursuit of wisdom (203b–204a)—the beautiful gods may be unreal but they are not useless and, therefore, cannot be simply bad. If, however, philosophy and poetry cannot be as separate as Socrates' most manifest argument suggests, it would appear to follow that neither can Eros as love of the beautiful and Eros as love of the good simply be divided into separate and opposing classes.

Given that it employs the divisions of his speech and begins with his interrogation, Socrates' speech might be thought to be directed primarily to Agathon. From the beginning, Socrates has worked to turn the banquet into a contest between Agathon and himself and thereby a contest between philosophy and poetry. Anticipating Socrates' trial by more than a decade, Agathon agreed to go to court over their competing claims to wisdom at a later date. Socrates, however, has forced the issue and made sure that

the contest between them is waged on the terrain of the question of the nature of Eros. We have already entertained the suspicion that Socrates uses Agathon as a proxy in the true contest between himself and Aristophanes, however, and the suspicion seems to be confirmed when Socrates' refutation of Agathon leads to the implicit result that Eros as rooted in need is necessarily tied to the real, that is, leads to a conclusion directly contrary not only to Agathon's, but Aristophanes' teaching, as well.

Nonetheless, before beginning his speech, Socrates addresses himself first of all to Phaedrus, whose permission he solicits to interrogate Agathon (199b). Explicitly, therefore, his speech is directed as much to Phaedrus as to Agathon and, indeed, Socrates' division between the love of the beautiful and the love of the good is an appeal more to Phaedrus' insight than to Agathon's, who ultimately erased the distinction he had drawn.[3] What distinguishes Phaedrus' and Agathon's characters is that the former, because of his self-interested desire for the good, appears immune to the charms of eros and the beautiful, while the latter suffers from a self-induced and self-forgetful intoxication in regard to the same. Phaedrus is a "cynic" and Agathon an "idealist." The proper addressee of Socrates' speech would be neither of these young men, therefore, but rather a youth who embodied the seemingly impossible combination of a succumbing, with an insurmountable resistance, to self-forgetfulness before the beautiful. This combination could be said to be the effect of eros if the core of eros proved to be ambivalent in such a way as to include both the love of the beautiful and the love of the good within it. Socrates appears to conjure up a youth possessed of such a complex erotic nature in his portrait of himself as a young man for whom a recognition of the implausibility of Diotima's "wisdom" is a cause of wonder (208b–c).[4]

In the opening gambit of his speech, Socrates delivers a series of what appear to be knockout blows to the positions of Agathon and Aristophanes. When Socrates asks Agathon whether eros is love of something or of nothing he characterizes as laughable the suggestion that eros could be "love of a mother or a father" (199d) and with that dismisses Aristophanes' claim that eros is the eros of tragedy and Oedipus the paradigmatic erotic man. The more decisive blow, however, is dealt to Aristophanes and Agathon simultaneously and follows directly from the relational character of eros that Socrates now establishes.[5] If eros includes a relationship to another in its very meaning, in the same way as does "father" or "brother," then eros as love of something—whatever that something may be—must be understood to necessarily lack and, therefore, stand in need of that which it loves or desires (200a–b). Socrates calls the necessity that need stand at the basis of erotic desire "wondrous" (200b). What is provocative of wonder in this regard seems to be, first of all, the way in which the need ingredient in eros ties it, despite the claims of the two poets, to the real: need can neither be

satisfied with Agathon's dreams of an impossible self-sufficiency nor reduced to Aristophanes' nostalgia for a state that never was and could never be. Hunger can neither be assuaged with a picture of a feast nor its urgency dismissed as a phantom of the imagination. Need establishes this link between eros and the truth, moreover, even in ignorance of the end of eros or in abstraction from any account of what might satisfy that need.[6] Contrary to Aristophanes, therefore, who argued that the perplexity regarding the end of eros indicated both the impossibility of its satisfaction and the unreality at its core, Socrates has in effect suggested that the neediness of eros, combined with the perplexity regarding what might alleviate that need, makes eros *the* truth-seeking principle in human life: eros as such can neither rest contest with the false, nor, therefore, pretend to possess a truth that it lacks. Eros stands in the way of ignorance of one's own ignorance (200e). It appears to operate in a way completely contrary to Agathon's "Eros" (i.e., *thumos*) and could never rest content with Aristophanes' specious version of one's own. It is precisely that which most of all is able to detect the alien in what is falsely said to be one's own.

In claiming that the human is defined by a love for a false opinion concerning what is one's own, Aristophanes had implicitly argued that the human is defined by an incorrigible attachment to false opinion itself and that eros was the cause of this attachment. As a consequence, however, it seemed impossible within the terms of his speech to account for how Aristophanes had liberated himself from this attachment to gain a purchase on the truth of man's condition. What Socrates now suggests is that, quite contrary to the claims made within his speech, it was in fact eros that allowed Aristophanes to detect and expose the fraudulence saturating human life. It was, however, his failure to understand the basis of his own attachment to the real and the true that led him to offer a false account of the psychological source of the unreality ingredient in the human: as Agathon's speech ultimately made clear, *thumos*, not eros, is that source. Aristophanes' failure to understand himself leads him to misunderstand the human in general.

Aristophanes' account, however, appeared to take its bearing from an analysis of the low or common man. Socrates implies, therefore, that, on the one hand, in his attempt to understand the low, he did not go low enough and so abstracted from need and its link to eros, and, on the other hand, was forced to treat the common or political man independently of or in abstraction from the exception or the "higher" man. The low, however, cannot be understood apart from its relation to the high and this relation can only be put on solid ground through starting one's analysis of the city with the arts and one's analysis of the human with the ground of the arts: need. Need is the link between the lowest and the highest in man.[7]

Thus, even in giving Aristophanes what he needs in order to account for his ascent from the fraudulent perspective of the law, Socrates refutes

the fundamental premises of his speech. By explaining to Aristophanes the source of his "big thoughts," he cuts him down to size and shows him why the human cannot be merely the locus of insubstantiality. Aristophanes argued that the perplexity at the heart of eros is the distinguishing trait of the human in the comprehensive, nonphilosophic sense and as such points to the insubstantiality of the human. He failed to detect how perplexity and mind are joined and so implicitly failed to recognize the beginning of philosophy in wonder. There is no place in his account of eros for the initiating experience of erotic longing: being "thunderstruck" before the beautiful (211d).

Having insisted on the neediness and lack that are definitive of eros, Socrates suddenly entertains an apparent objection to this characterization of erotic desire. There are those, after all, he says, who seem to desire what they already possess. Socrates, however, denies that this is, strictly speaking, the case. The truth is that they desire not what they of necessity already have at present, whether they want it or not, but that they long to secure its possession also in the future (200c–d). This, it would seem, is compatible with Socrates' original argument concerning eros' neediness and lack, since to desire to sustain what one already possesses as a possession in the future is "to love what is not at hand and what he does not have" (200d).

The examples that Socrates adduces to support this claim—greatness, strength, swiftness, and health—all appear to be drawn from Aristophanes' characterization of his circle men who represented, in Aristophanes' view, what the great majority believe to be in accord with what is most one's own. Socrates, however, takes Aristophanes' love of one's own, strips it of nostalgia—and, therefore, the past—and argues that, despite his initial claims that seemed to rule out any such identification, eros may be characterized as a love of one's own if the qualification is added that such love is directed to the preservation of what is one's own in the future, rather than its enjoyment in the present.

Given what is to follow in Socrates' speech—namely, the way in which Diotima divides eros into the truth of eros as philosophy and what is ordinarily called eros, which turns out to be precisely the desire to preserve one's own in perpetuity—we can see in Socrates' double characterization of eros an anticipation of this division in the Diotima section of his speech. He would have first offered the core of his understanding of the truth of eros as grounded in need and perplexity and then a sketch of his understanding of what most men call eros: the desire to preserve one's own in the face of death.

Yet the premise upon which the dialogue that comprises Socrates' speech proper is based—namely, that Socrates' knowledge of erotics was transmitted to him as a young man by a wiser and older woman (201d)—seems to link

the issue of the desire to preserve in the future what one already possesses in the present to the issue of eros as philosophy, as well. Indeed, Diotima's entire account will conclude with a discussion of the correct practice of pederasty that she presents as an attempt to preserve the practice of erotics through passing it on to the next generation (210a–212a). Diotima thus appears to represent the presence of the concern for preservation and perpetuation within Socratic erotics itself. Without the possibility of such transmission and preservation, Socrates' erotics would not only be neither nostalgic nor progressive, but would look ahead to the future only to see reflected there its own radical contingency and finitude.

In summarizing the conclusion they have reached thus far, Socrates adds something that has not been made explicit before, namely, that eros is not simply the desire for what is not present, what one does not have, what one is not, and, therefore, what one is in need of, but that such need must itself be present to the one in need (200e). Unself-conscious need is not eros. Eros, therefore, has self-reflection and self-knowledge built into its very existence and this self-reflection seems, in and of itself, to be detached from shame. Socrates on more than one occasion quotes with approval the passage from Homer that declares that shame is not good for a man in need.[8] Contrary to Aristophanes' claims, perplexity and self-knowledge are not only compatible, but inseperable and shame and self-understanding essentially disjoined.

Socrates concludes his exchange with Agathon by drawing the implications of his argument together in order to refute the chief claim of Agathon's own speech, namely, that eros is both beautiful and good (201b–c). The playfulness of Agathon's claim concerning the divinity of eros appears to be made manifest by the docility with which he admits that, if eros is love of the beautiful and therefore lacks and is not itself the beautiful, he knew nothing of what he said (201b). What Agathon put forward with serious intent seems to be his opinion that the beautiful and the good are one and the same, since he reaffirms this with some vigor (201c). Socrates takes this identity of the two—along with the corollary that eros as love of the beautiful lacks not only the beautiful things but the good things as well—as the first principle of his account (201d). As his argument develops, however, the assumption that the good and the beautiful—and therefore love of the good and love of the beautiful—are identical is undermined and the question of the possibility of eros possessing the good emerges. Socrates' speech in its elaboration proves to be a refutation of its own Agathonian starting point. What is first in the seemly order of Socrates' eulogy is not identical with what is first in itself.

That Diotima is a fiction devised by Socrates for the occasion is a fact recognized by at least two of the guests at Agathon's banquet, namely, Aristophanes (212c) and Phaedrus.[9] Nor can this fact escape the attention of

Plato's reader once it is seen that "she" makes direct reference to every one of the speeches prior to Socrates' own (207a–209e). Through this fiction, Socrates represents his erotics not as something idiosyncratic and unique to him, but as a foreign import. Indeed, as the gift of a woman who is a stranger to Athens, it is doubly alien: both non-Athenian and non-male (201d). Thus Socrates makes perfectly clear the distinctiveness of his erotics in contrast to what the guests at the banquet understand to be eros. Despite their differences, all the other speakers agree that eros is, in one sense or another, a political phenomenon, if not a peculiarly Athenian phenomenon, and as such essentially masculine or male. Socratic erotics, by contrast, is as private as the apolitical life of women and *metics*—Socrates flees from the crowd of thirty thousand that Agathon eagerly embraces—and, in one sense, not essentially tied to Athens and her particular character—it is the human as such, and neither the foundation nor the final end of the Athenian polis.

If Diotima is a fiction, however, then so too, it would seem, is the transmissibility of Socratic erotics, about which even Diotima herself evinces some doubt (210a). If Socrates' erotics were unique to him, however, then, as we have noted, Socratic philosophy would not only come to be with Socrates and his turn to the human things, but perish with him as well: his philosophy would be as mortally exposed as the Athenians during the time of the plague. That Diotima is the cause of a decade long delay of the plague (201d) must indicate that she, or Socrates' construction of her, is representative of the possibility of the preservation of Socratic erotics despite its being, strictly speaking, unique to Socrates and, therefore, nontransmissible.

As a character in Plato's cosmos of dialogues, Diotima is closely related to Epimenides, who is mentioned by Kleinias in the *Laws* (642d). It is, in part, Kleinias' ties to Athens through his ties of blood to Epimenides that makes him receptive to the Athenian stranger's efforts to smuggle philosophy into the alien context of the Doric regime (641e–643a). Just as Diotima visited Athens ten years before the plague, that is, close to ten years before the beginning of the war with Sparta, so Epimenides visited Athens ten years before the Persian war (642d–e). But whereas Epimenides—who is, like Diotima, associated with prophecy and sacrifice—predicted the Persian defeat and, thereby, Athens' victory and ascent toward empire, Diotima, through her delay of the plague, seems to contribute to the disaster at the beginning of the war that anticipated Athens' ultimate defeat and decline.[10] On the one hand, Diotima and Epimenides together represent the seemingly paradoxical possibility of the transmission of Socratic erotics and Socratic philosophy, and, on the other hand, they frame the rise and fall of the Athenian empire or the origin and the end of the context in which Socrates came to be and perished. That Diotima hails from Mantinea should remind us of the fate of that city at the hands of the conquering Spartans—the dispersal and rustification of her citizens.[11] This seems to parallel Athens' fate in her

defeat and raises the specter of the rebarbarization of Greek civilization as such. The survival of Socratic philosophy then faces a double difficulty: the problem, on the one hand, of preserving Socrates' erotics beyond his death and, on the other, of preserving Socratic philosophy beyond the span of Greek or Athenian civilization. The Platonic dialogue is the ultimate solution to both difficulties.[12]

In announcing that he will recount Diotima's speech on erotics "on the basis of what has been agreed on" (201d) between Agathon and himself—namely, that the good and the beautiful are one and that eros lacks both—Socrates reiterates his approval for Agathon's mode of structuring his speech—to "first tell who Eros himself is and what sort he is and then tell his deeds" (201d–e). As we have noted, Socrates (or Diotima's) speech will indeed be structured around something like this division, but it will ultimately seem to dispense with one of the fundamental tenants of Agathon's speech and of the poet's account of eros in general: the personification of eros. Socrates then will appear to deny that the proper question in relation to eros is "Who is Eros?" and will point the inquiry in the direction of the "what is" question. Since, however, in Agathon's speech, and the practice of the poets in general, the personification of Eros is part and parcel of his deification, the question that is most distinctive of Socrates' inquiry, when it is applied to the topic of eros, necessarily moves in the direction of overturning the premise of the evenings speeches, namely, that Eros is a "great god." One wonders if it does not produce this same effect in every case.

Socrates claims that in his youth he shared Agathon's opinion that Eros is a great God and that it was Diotima who set him strait (201e). Diotima simply draws the conclusion implied though unstated in Socrates' exchange with Agathon: if eros is love of the beautiful and the beautiful and the good are the same, then eros can be neither beautiful nor good; since, however, the gods are said to be both beautiful and good, eros cannot be a god (202c–d). Her refutation of the divinity of eros, however, turns out to be at the same time her revelation of the in-between that lies in the midst of the beautiful and the good, on the one hand, and the ugly and the bad, on the other (202b). If Eros is neither beautiful nor good, he is at the same time neither ugly nor bad. The reality of such an in-between state was denied implicitly by Agathon's speech and, though Aristophanes seemed to place human beings and their erotic longing between the subhuman condition of the circle men and the transhuman condition of the gods, his denial of any substantial reality to this state also constituted a denial of the reality of the in-between. Of the prior speeches, it would seem that only Eryximachus was, despite himself, forced to concede the existence of something like the in-between in admitting that the human good in order to be real, that is, if it were not to collapse into the merely apparent good or the beautiful, had to be a mixture of the "good" and the bad and that the good of this mix had

to consist in a similar mixture, namely, of pleasure and pain. But Diotima, as we will see, denies that the in-between is a mixture of contraries: it is not both X and its contrary, but neither X nor its contrary. Her account of Eros as in-between, therefore, shows the reality lying behind Eryximachus' account of things as the aggregation of contraries. The nature of the in-between and how it can exist as something other than a sum or mixture is the dominant theme of the first portion of her speech.

When Socrates fails to grasp how the not-beautiful need not be the ugly, she points out that his failure leads him directly to the failure to recognize "that there is something in between wisdom and lack of learning" (202a). From what follows in her speech wherein she locates philosophy as between these two (203e), Diotima seems to be suggesting here that Socrates' failure to recognize the in-between has made it impossible for him to recognize the true character of philosophy. Eros cannot be a great god and also the core of philosophy. The question of the status of eros, therefore, and that of the nature of philosophy are one and the same.

Unless we are to understand her as arguing for the identity of philosophy and right opinion, Diotima puts off for the time being the discovery of philosophy between wisdom and ignorance and offers, rather, the example of to opine correctly (*ortha doxazein*) as lying between science and phronesis and lack of understanding (202a). That she is far from identifying any sort of opinion with philosophy is demonstrated when she replies to Socrates' final objection to her teaching that eros is neither beautiful and good, nor ugly and bad, namely, his insistence that all agree that eros is a great god. In fielding this objection, Socrates inadvertently reveals the sole characteristic by which an opinion can be understood to be "correct" rather than erroneous in the absence of any account that would transform opinion into knowledge: universal agreement (202d).[13] Diotima, however, goes on to demonstrate the inadequacy of all so-called universal agreement in establishing an opinion as correct by refuting the opinion that all men allegedly hold that eros is a great god.

In showing the incorrectness of this ostensibly "correct opinion," that is, in implying that opinion as such is erroneous, Diotima seems to show something of the character of the in-between. According to the implications of her argument, "correct" opinion would simply be opinion as such that understands itself to lie between, on the one hand, a brutish lack of learning and, on the other, the correctness of scientific knowledge. The truth of lack of learning, however, or the unwillingness to seek knowledge would be precisely opinion that understands itself to be correct, as Diotima will shortly make clear (204a), and the assumption that knowledge is simply identical to science (*episteme*), abstracting as it does from the unexamined and undemonstrated starting points of all scientific knowledge and so from the provisional character of its proofs and conclusions, appears to be the

result of having taken sight of knowledge from the perspective of opinion. In effect, Diotima shows in this case that the in-between is the original from which the extremes that it understands itself to lie between have been split off as fragments and projected as apparitionally self-subsisting classes. In showing that "correct opinion" stands in relation to two "alien" extremes that are in fact merely versions of itself in the guise of a phantom other, Plato relates this passage in Socrates' speech back to the implicit argument contained in Agathon's speech according to which such self-diremption is the work of *thumos*. *Thumos*, therefore, lies at the basis of opinion and its specious class formations.

When Socrates, having been forced to agree that Eros as neither good nor beautiful and is therefore not a god, asks, as would seem to follow logically, if Eros is then mortal, Diotima corrects him by asserting that Eros is in-between in this respect as well: he is between the mortal and the immortal and so a "great daimon" (202e). Eros is a living being, like a god or man, but shares the distinguishing trait of neither. If it is reasonable to assume the existence of the plain between the beautiful and the ugly and the neutral between the good and the bad, it is nevertheless hard to see how there might be a *tertium quid* lying between mortality and immortality and qualifying as the attribute of a living being and the one possible, if mythic, solution to this conundrum Diotima rules out: Eros cannot be, like the Homeric heroes, a mixture of the mortal and immortal (203a).

According to Diotima's arguments thus far, the gods are distinguished by their possession of the beautiful and the good things together with immortality, whereas man is distinguished, it would seem, by his ugliness, badness, and mortality. Between the two lies the "great daimon" Eros. Diotima, therefore, has kept the formal structure of three classes of beings that Aristophanes articulated in his speech (god, man, and beast), but has jettisoned the bestial and introduced the daimonic. Man is no longer defined by his in-between status, it would seem, but rather this status is properly assigned to Eros. The effect upon the estimation of man, however, has remained constant despite these changes: Diotima appears to agree with Aristophanes that human existence is no good. It would seem that as long as there are said to be transhuman living beings who possess both the beautiful and the good, the worthlessness or nothingness of human life necessarily follows.

Since Eros has now been declared by Diotima to be a living being, Socrates naturally asks about the nature of his agency or power (202e). He assumes that, in this respect, he resembles the gods in possessing a power beyond the merely human. As Diotima describes it, however, Eros' power transcends not only that of human beings, but the gods as well. Though the gods' power is ordinarily associated with their justice, according to Diotima, their chief function is to offer goods in exchange for the sacrifices that human beings perform in their honor (202e).[14] This exchange, Diotima declares, is

made possible only by Eros, since there is no direct intercourse between gods and men (203a). The power of Eros is to act as the intermediary between god and man and through this, Diotima says, "the whole itself is bound together" (202e). God, Eros, and man are not simply different and discrete classes or kinds, but essentially related to one another as parts of a whole. Moreover, Eros is that part of the whole through which it is made whole. He is the principle of the unity of "the whole itself."

If the power of the gods is associated with their goodness—their providing benefits to man in exchange for sacrifice—such goodness is made possible only through the power of Eros. Eros is the condition for any good that men might receive from the gods and apart from Eros the gods would be good for nothing and no one. Eros cannot simply lack the good. Indeed, if we recall Socrates' intellectual autobiography in the *Phaedo*—wherein he baptizes with the name "the good" that cause which he has been unable to discover for himself or learn from another, that "daimonic force" that "truly binds and hold things together" (99c)—we are forced to ask whether Diotima did not make the attempt to teach him that the "great daimon" Eros represented precisely this causal power, that is, that Eros represented something like the sort of cosmological first principle that Eryximachus wished to proclaim.[15]

Apart from the peculiarity of the fact that Diotima seems to have implied both that that which stands between the good and the bad and which ought to be the neutral, is in fact the good, and that human beings, as bad, nevertheless receive and enjoy goods from the hands of the gods through the mediation of Eros, we are puzzled most of all by the report of the mature Socrates on the last day of his life, which suggests that either he failed to learn this lesson from Diotima when young or, after repeating it with approbation at Agathon's banquet, subsequently rejected it as false. In fact, however, Diotima, in the next part of her teaching, which forms a response to Socrates' inquiry regarding the parentage of Eros, effectively demonstrates that the truth of Eros as binding the whole together cannot be understood in terms of the mythical presentation that she has offered in describing Eros a cause. Eros, she will show, cannot be a cosmological first principle.

Diotima has thus far presented herself in the guise of a priestess or prophetess and her teaching on Eros has appeared in the form of an initiation into quasireligious mysteries. Accordingly, she has portrayed Eros as the root of all divination and priest-craft associated with the practice of religion, for example, sacrifice, initiatory rituals, incantations, and all prophecy and magic (202e–203a). In the sequel, however, she will purify her account of such trappings and, in the very next portion of her speech, perform a destructive analysis of the Homeric gods that will fundamentally transform the understanding of what it means for Eros to be in-between: both the

extremes between which Eros lies and, consequently, Eros itself will cease to be understood primarily in terms of living beings.[16] She has prepared young Socrates for this transition at the end of her account of the power of the great daimon by revealing to him that anyone who, like herself, is "wise in things like this," is a "daimonic man" (203a). "Daimon"—a noun describing a particular kind of being beyond the human—has now become the adjective "daimonic" describing a particular kind of wisdom attributable to a particular kind of human being. It follows then that at least some human beings share in the goodness that Diotima implicitly attributed to Eros through her description of his power. The most beautiful human being, in comparison to a god, may be ugly,[17] but Diotima has effectively denied that the gods alone possess the good. She has, in other words, affirmed the possible goodness of the defective.

When Diotima informs Socrates about the circumstances surrounding the birth of Eros, it turns out that, though he happened to be conceived on the day of Aphrodite's birth, he is not, as is often said, her son (203c). Aphrodite is the goddess who most clearly personifies the trait that is characteristic of the gods of the poets as distinct from the gods of the city, namely, the beauty of the human form. Goodness, on the other hand, is not one of her prominent features. Though Diotima speaks of "all the other gods" as present at the feast held in honor of Aphrodite's birth, the only god she mentions by name as being present is Poros (resource) the son of Metis (mind). Zeus is named only in connection with the fact that Poros seems to have taken possession of his garden (203b). If we recall Hesiod's claims regarding, on the one hand, the birth of Aphrodite and, on the other, the birth of a son of Metis by Zeus,[18] we are forced to conclude that on the day of Eros' conception, the day upon which the beautiful Aphrodite was born, the entire dynasty of gods representing kingly power and, in the case of Zeus, the justice of the law, has been overthrown. Poros, though perhaps Zeus' son, is not a god of the law and the city. As Aphrodite is the personification of bodily beauty, so he is the personification of the the beautiful in regard to mind, namely, wisdom. He is the overcoming of perplexity (*aporia*) incarnate. As the double embodiment of the beautiful in Diotima's account, Aphrodite and Poros seem to represent the triumph of the gods of the poets over against the gods of the city. Socrates appears to be separating out, insofar as is possible, the beautiful gods from the just gods, that is, he is isolating the distinctively Greek or Athenian aspect of the gods. The goodness of the gods for man that Eros makes possible has everything to do with their beauty and nothing to do with their alleged justice.

Eros is conceived through the agency of Penia (poverty) employing the beautiful god Poros to her own ends absent any conscious intention on his part to benefit her (203b–c). Penia is a "lover" of the beautiful god without that beautiful god returning her affection or even being aware of

her existence. Penia is not a goddess—she goes uninvited to the feast to which "all the gods" have been invited (203b). Given Diotima's insistence that there is no direct intercourse between human beings and gods (203a), however, neither can she be a human being. She is, therefore, a daimon. If Poros is lack of perplexity personified, Penia is perplexity (*aporia*) personified. She is unusually resourceful in her resourcelessness (*aporia*). She has devised a plot to make a child with Poros (203b–c). Her opportunity arises when she discovers Poros drunk on nectar and asleep in the garden of Zeus. Diotima seems to imply that if wine had been invented at that time, Poros might have become drunk and remained awake. Wine, however, though said to be a gift of the gods to man, is not a drink of the gods. The gods drink nectar and Poros is portrayed only as unconscious or unaware. That perplexity is perfectly compatible with the keenest wakefulness Penia adequately demonstrates. That drinking of wine is indeed compatible with wakefulness Socrates will make clear by the end of the *Symposium* (223c–d). Nectar is to wine as wisdom is to perplexity and philosophy. Diotima implies that wisdom of the sort Poros represents—the overcoming of perplexity—is incompatible with wakefulness.

Penia, through her love of and plotting after the beautiful, conceives and gives birth to her child Eros who is likewise a lover of the beautiful (203c). What is curious, however, is that Diotima, in listing those traits that Eros derives from his mother and those he derives from his father, places plotting to "trap the beautiful and the good" with the inheritance of his father (203d). In this way she alerts us to the fact that virtually all of the traits said to distinguish Eros, and not just his "tough, squalid, shoeless and homeless" condition, are derived from his mother.[19] Courage, impetuousness, intensity, hunting, weaving devices, desiring understanding and supplying it, and philosophizing are distinctive not of Poros, but Penia (203d). As Diotima will explain momentarily, none of the gods philosophize, since they are wise (203e). Penia is the self-aware philosopher in love with the beautiful who employs the somnolent god in order to give birth to another version of herself and in this way secure the good.[20]

Since Diotima has gone as far as possible in depriving the beautiful gods of life short of eliminating them altogether, we are hardly surprised when she revises her account of what it means for Eros to be in-between such that the daimon becomes the activity of philosophizing that lies between not the beings god and man, but the attributes wisdom and lack of understanding (203e). "God" and "man" become simply placeholders for two forms of nonphilosophizing, namely, a wisdom that need not seek wisdom and a lack of understanding that also lacks awareness of this lack. The latter, in Diotima's view, is a very hard condition indeed, insofar as the one in need does not believe he is in need and, therefore, fails to desire that which he needs (204a). Diotima, like Socrates, argues that erotic desire

and awareness of need are necessarily conjoined. Through her, however, Socrates now makes explicit the identity between erotic desire as grounded in awareness of need and philosophy and, therefore, the necessary togetherness of philosophy and self-knowledge. Wisdom, according to her account, exhibits no such necessary conjunction with self-understanding.[21] From what she has said, then, it seems to follow that wisdom and mind can ever be conjoined and that any philosophy that does not know itself to be erotic is not philosophy, properly speaking. Aristophanes cannot be Socrates' superior when it comes to self-knowledge.

Diotima describes Eros as a combination of the poverty and lack of his mother and the resource of his father and suggests that together these form a resourceful neediness or *aporia* (203e).[22] That resourceful neediness was in fact already characteristic of Eros' mother we have noted. What follows from this, however, is that Penia as identical to Eros is the prior unity of the separate entities that are, according to Diotima's story, the cause of his existence. The truth then of Diotima's causal account regarding the parentage of Eros is an analysis of the whole of Eros into its parts—the better to perceive the structure of that whole for what it is. Moreover, the truth of Eros as in-between god and man, and through his intercession binding the whole itself together, is that Eros is the prior unity of both god and man (the daimonic) and what they represent, namely, wisdom and ignorance. Eros is not the cause of the unity of the whole. It is the truth of that whole. The whole with which Diotima is concerned, however, is not that of the cosmos as bound together by Eros, but that of Eros itself. Socrates was right, therefore, in rejecting Eros as a causal principle of the cosmos and he learned this from Diotima.[23] If Eros in its paradigmatic sense, namely, as philosophy, is in fact first in relation to those things to which it initially appeared, as causally dependent upon them, to be secondary, then causal accounts, despite their claims to arrive at what is first in the order of things, must always trade in the derivative. A "first cause" is a contradiction in terms and only the analysis of a whole into its parts stands a chance of grasping what is genuinely primary.

In her presentation of what Eros is, Diotima's account seems to mirror the erection of specious distinctions and classes that is the hallmark of opinion as grounded in the thumoeidetic. What *thumos* does without self-understanding, however, Diotima (or Socrates) has done in full self-consciousness. Diotima's procedure, therefore, amounts to a mode of analysis in which the untenable divisions of opinion are taken as a starting point and established precisely in order to reveal where such divisions necessarily break down. This is precisely what it means to analyze a whole into its parts. But these divisions have as their complement the assertion of certain identities—for example, the identity of the beautiful and the good in god and of the ugly and the bad in man. With the breakdown of these divi-

sions, therefore, comes the splitting apart of these false unities: Diotima's argument has driven a wedge between the beautiful and the good and the ugly and the bad by showing the possibility of the goodness of the ugly or defective in man. Once the identity of the beautiful and the good is dispensed with, however, the reality of the gods is suspended. Lacking the good, the beautiful gods dissolve into the image of an impossible perfection. If the gods can longer be understood to be beings, however, then Eros can no longer be understood to occupy the range between the lower order of beings (mortals) and the higher (gods). The spatial and hierarchical metaphor of the in-between is superceded by the eidetic understanding of Eros as neither–nor: Eros is neither the overcoming of need, nor the lack of awareness of need. It is awareness of need.[24] That is, it is neither the perfection of knowledge in self-sufficient wisdom, nor an ignorance that is ignorant of its own condition. It is knowledge of ignorance.

Unlike the in-between, however, which appeared to presuppose the existence of the extremes in the midst of which it stood, Eros as neither wisdom nor simple ignorance illuminates the true character of Eros as knowledge of ignorance even if one assumes the ultimate unreality not only of the false opinion regarding the sufficiency of ignorance, but of wisdom, as well. Wisdom as the overcoming of all ignorance or exhaustive knowledge need not be possible for it to serve as a negatively defining term for knowledge of ignorance. "God," Diotima suggests, is the other in terms of which alone the reality of the philosopher can be made apparent.[25] The beauty of god is that without which the good of the self-knowledge of the philosopher cannot be made apparent.

Insofar as the self-conscious analysis of philosophy as knowledge of ignorance mirrors the unself-conscious constructions and "deconstructions" of an Agathonian lack of awareness of need, one way to understand Diotima's claim that Penia makes use of the beautiful god Poros in order to give birth to Eros as a version of herself, is to say that philosophy self-consciously employs the specious divisions and collections of the beautiful in its effort to arrive at self-understanding: Socrates on the evening of the *Symposium* seems most eager to converse with the beautiful Agathon who wondrously appears as a distorted image of Socrates himself. Penia's relationship to the beautiful god finds its mirror in Socrates' relationship to the beautiful Agathon who, in claiming to possess the self-sufficiency and wisdom of a god, showed himself to be the apparition of wisdom: the sophist.

That Eros as philosophy is identical to knowledge of ignorance seems to be the insight that Socrates is groping toward in asking Diotima who the philosophers are (204a). Whether on account of Socrates' failure to frame the proper question at this point—her whole account thus far points not to "Who are the philosophers?," but "What is philosophy?" as the question to be posed—or for some less obvious cause, Diotima suddenly displays a

Xanthipian irascibility in insisting that the answer to his question ought now to be evident even to a child and impatiently summarizing the exposition she has just completed (204b–c). However, though she has, by Socrates' account, certainly displaced Xanthippe as the most important woman in his life, nonetheless, having just finished explaining that Eros' mother is a character from a play by Aristophanes,[26] Diotima might be said to resemble most closely not Socrates' wife of later years, but Socrates himself in his bachelorhood as portrayed by Aristophanes' *Clouds*. Both adopt a priestly guise in their efforts to usher a neophyte into the inner sanctum of philosophy under the aegis of the gods of the poets and both visibly display their impatience with the initiate when it is clear that their efforts have not met with complete success.[27] The failure of the young Socrates seems to be the necessary effect of Socrates' peculiar mode of self-presentation in his speech: he has split himself into a wise woman and an ignorant young man. This split mirrors the split between Penia or poverty and Poros or resource as they appear on the surface of Diotima's account. In both cases, however, the result is the failure explicitly to articulate the insight that philosophy is identical to perplexity as knowledge of ignorance. Even in the case of the second pair, when Poros and Penia are combined in the production of Eros, their additive union fails to return us to the original whole of which they are the apparitional fragments. Only when it is recognized that Penia is herself this original whole and as such identical to Eros is the real nature of Eros as philosophy revealed.

The surface failure of either Diotima or young Socrates to articulate the identity between Eros as philosophy and knowledge of ignorance seems, given the Aristophanic atmosphere surrounding it, to point to a similar failure on the part of Aristophanes. For all the genius exhibited in the wisest of his plays, he appears to display, no less clearly, a Strepsiadian shortcoming in regard to the apprehension of the truth regarding Socratic philosophy. Aristophanes' portrayal of Socrates in the *Clouds* abstracts entirely from his knowledge of ignorance: his Socrates, like Socrates' Diotima, appears rather as a "perfect sophist."[28] Aristophanes' misrepresentation of Socratic philosophy, however, is much deeper and more serious then that of Socrates' Diotima. She after all emphatically identifies the truth of Eros with philosophy and in doing so leads us to the very brink of the insight that as such philosophy must be knowledge of ignorance. In Aristophanes' case, however, he seems in the *Clouds* to identify Eros with the hubris and the tyrannical gestures (parricide and incest) and ambitions (overturning the respect for the old or ancestral that is the basis of all law) of Pheidippes.[29] At least on this score, Plato's Aristophanes' reflects accurately the author of the *Clouds*: both understand Eros exclusively in terms of antinomian desire and, in this sense, as derivative of the law and confined within the horizon of the political. Given his presuppositions, Aristophanes cannot see the link between mind

and Eros and, therefore, fails to identify Eros as the transpolitical core of the human.

Despite their deep and wide-ranging disagreement regarding the nature of Eros and, therefore, the character of philosophy, Socrates seems to agree with the author of the *Clouds* on at very least one point: if philosophy employs the beautiful gods of the poets as a rhetorical and dialectical vehicle in its ascent to the beings, it nonetheless disposes of those gods in that very use. Just as Aristophanes portrays his Socrates as making use of the clouds in the first steps of Strepsiades' initiation into the thinkery only to debunk and discard them in his indoor education; so Diotima employs the beautiful gods in her articulation of the nature of Eros, even while exposing their foundations and thereby undermining the supposition of their reality.

When we consider the two examples that Diotima has offered of the beautiful gods in her account of the coming to be of eros—namely, Aphrodite and Poros—we discover the double root of these gods in the divinization of the beautiful human *eidos* (Aphrodite) and the personification of a concept (Poros). The former, however, finds its source in a tendency native to Eros—the lover's inclination to divinize the beautiful beloved[30]—while the latter appears to be rooted in *thumos*—the inclination of anger to personify the inanimate. In the poet's presentation of Eros as a great god, however, these two sources and their effects are fused: Eros is, on the one hand, the invisible *eidos* of the human made divine and, on the other, the concept "love" personified.

Diotima both reveals and discredits this double source of the poet's gods when she shows young Socrates the character of his error regarding the divinity of Eros. Socrates, she says, mistook the lover for the beloved and, on that basis, attributed to love all that we attribute to the beloved—blessedness and perfection, that is, divinity (204c). Socrates then both divinized the core of the human and personified the concept of the power embodied in Eros, namely, the tendency to divinize the beloved. Through this error, young Socrates, like Agathon, effected what appears to be the self-divinization of Eros' power to divinize.

When Diotima corrects this error on Socrates' part, therefore, she exposes the erroneous character of the double source of the beautiful gods. She cannot both tell the truth about Eros and preserve the beautiful gods. Speaking more precisely, she cannot bring to light the reality of Eros, while preserving the fiction of the reality of the gods of the poets. She is compelled to expose the nonbeing of the beautiful gods in depriving them of the good.

In the wake of this deflation of the beautiful gods, however, comes a reevaluation of the character of the beloved or what Eros is "of." If Eros is love of the beautiful, the beautiful, it seems, can no longer take the shape of the gods, that is, a human shape. When she insists that the lover has

another "idea" than that of the beloved (204c), Diotima suggests that the appearance of "blessedness" and "perfection" (i.e., self-sufficiency and completeness) that the beautiful as the object of love possesses may be identified with its "idea." In her story of Penia plotting to trap the beautiful Poros she has come very close to reducing the object of love to a beauty that lacks life. She now pushes forward in this direction by virtually identifying the object of love with the idea of the beautiful. This movement will find its completion at the end of her speech when she appears to declare the highest object of Eros to be the nonliving monoeidetic "beautiful itself" (211b).

Already at this point in the argument, therefore, Diotima implies that the relation that exists between lover and beloved is essentially unidirectional. Contrary to her prior teaching, Eros does not bind together the immortal beloved and the mortal lover by shuttling back and forth between the two. Eros is always on the way "up"—this appears to be the truth of its directedness to the future—and the object of love (the idea of the beautiful) neither possesses awareness nor exhibits agency in regard to the lover. Thus, contrary to the teachings of Aristophanes and Eryximachus, love is not necessarily or essentially mutual. The demand for mutuality in Aristophanes' portrayal of Eros as love of one's own (a longing for the restoration of an original and rightful possession), therefore, might be thought to be a demand that is derivative of the law and its justice and equality and rooted not in Eros, but in the thumotic ambition for recognition or the desire for honor.

Since she refuses explicitly to identify philosophical eros with knowledge of ignorance, Diotima, though offering a kind of answer to Socrates' question as to who the philosophers are, has not revealed to him what philosophy is. It seems that the formulation of the "what is" question and the coming to light of philosophy as knowledge of ignorance go hand in hand and she has left to Socrates the discovery of both. As a consequence of her reticence, philosophy seems to fade from the scene in her account: the second half of her speech treats not eros in the paradigmatic sense, but what is generally called eros or the nonphilosophical version of eros and when philosophy reappears at the end of her speech it is identified with wisdom (205d, 210d–e). Whereas she characterized philosophy as love of the beautiful, Diotima will argue that eros in the common or vulgar sense is a species of love of the good (206a). The reality of vulgar eros, however, will prove to be poetry as that alone that is able to secure the ostensible good sought by this form of erotic desire. Diotima, therefore, separates love of the beautiful from love of the good, identifies the former with philosophy and the latter at its peak with poetry. By the same means, she then separates philosophy from poetry. However, though present within the first part of her speech, in the second part the gods have vanished and eros is now considered apart from all ref-

erence to the divine in this sense. Having paired the beautiful gods with philosophy, Diotima offers an account of the poet with no reference to the gods of the poets. This is but one of the more striking clues that something has gone awry in her account. A still clearer sign of difficulty in this regard is the fact that, having separated love of the beautiful from love of the good and assigned philosophy to the former class, it nonetheless shows up almost immediately as a member of the latter class as well (205d).

The second part of Diotima's speech turns out to be a recapitulation and reinterpretation of all of the speeches that preceded Socrates' own. She begins with a response to and refutation of Aristophanes' chief claims (205d–206a) and proceeds to articulate versions of Eryximachus' (207a–208b), Phaedrus' (208c–e), Pausanius' (209a–c), and Agathon's (209c–e) speeches, in that order.[31] She, therefore, offers not only an account of vulgar eros that finds its peak in poetry, but an account of Athens as the city shaped by the teachings of the poets and infused with the longings of a politicized eros.

In the first half of her speech, however, Diotima distilled the essence, as it were, of the beautiful unreality of the gods in her fabrication of the novel god Poros. Poros, as an offspring of Metis, appears to be a transformed version of Athena: he is Athena stripped of her relation to Zeus, that is, justice and the law personified.[32] Athena, however, is the name not only of a goddess, but a city and, as we have observed, Poros is a reflection of Agathon. The latter, however, represents an Athens stripped of all relation to necessity and thoroughly assimilated to the beautiful through the enchantments of the speeches of the poets. Poros then stands for an Athens looked at exclusively from the side of the beautiful and the love of the beautiful instilled in her by the presence of the poets and their speeches. The second half of her speech, therefore, though in one sense offering an account of poetry that abstracts from the gods of the poets, in another sense represents the articulation of the structure of Diotima's beautiful god Poros, that is, the structure of the city of Athens insofar as it is animated by a passion for the beautiful, in abstraction from the just. If it is possible to identify Diotima's Poros with Diotima's Athens, however, it is also possible to see in the problem of Socrates' use of the beautiful gods the problem of Socrates' use of the city of Athens or the question as to why erotics was possible only in that city in which the poets and their gods were most at home. It is only in the last portion of her speech in which she offers her "final initiation" (210a) that Diotima will take up this issue.

The transition from the first part of her speech that deals with what eros is to the second that deals with the deeds of those who are called lovers (206b) takes its bearing from Socrates' fourth and final question regarding the use of eros for human beings (204c). Socrates' focus on utility provides

Diotima with precisely the pivot she needs to move from love of the beautiful to love of the good.

Diotima poses to Socrates the same pair of questions twice: first, in relation to the beautiful (204d) and then in relation to the good (204e–205a). She begins by asking him what it is that he who loves the beautiful things loves. His answer that the lover of the beautiful wishes to make the beautiful his own (204d) is not self-evidently necessary—the beautiful may and often must be appreciated from afar, that is, it requires perspectival distance and, therefore, resists the attempt to possess it—and when Diotima suggests that this answer "longs for another question" (204d), namely, what he who acquires the beautiful things will have, Socrates is completely stymied. He encounters no such difficulty in answering these same questions in regard to the good. Responding to Diotima's inquiry as to what the one who acquires the good things will have, he says that he is better equipped (*euporapteron*) to answer this: he will be happy (*eudaimon*). In reply, Diotima suggests that in this case there is no further need to ask, since the answer is "believed to be complete" (205a). A moment later, when she points out to Socrates, who has agreed that the love of the good is "common to all," that nevertheless we call only some and not all lovers, Socrates expresses his wonder and Diotima insists that he cease wondering (205b). When the love of the beautiful is displaced by the love of the good as the topic of their inquiry, the longing for further questioning is annulled by an apparent completeness, *aporia* gives way to *euporia*, the daimonic to eudaimonia, and the starting point of philosophy in wonder is suppressed.

That such effects are the necessary result of the replacement of love of the beautiful with love of the good is made clear by Diotima only as her argument progresses. For the time being, she merely explains why, if as Socrates has affirmed the eros for "happiness" or the possession of the good is common to all human beings, we deny that everyone loves and reserve the name of "lover" for a certain few. According to Diotima, a certain kind of eros is given the name of the whole, just as, in the case of making, "one part is separated off from all of making" and given the name of the whole (205b–c). Both what is commonly understood to be eros or vulgar eros and poetry seem to be parts endowed with the false appearance of the whole. According to the terms of Diotima's argument, in identifying a part of eros as love of the good with the whole or in forming this specious class, the multitude must exclude all the other parts of this whole from membership in the class. The multitude implicitly denies the truth that Diotima has just revealed to young Socrates, namely, that philosophy is eros properly understood. If, however, Diotima is right to insist that philosophy, along with gymnastic and moneymaking, are parts of the whole of eros as love of the good (205d), then philosophy straddles the division between love of the beautiful and love of the good and shows up anomalously as part of two

apparently separate classes. Since poetry, however, turns out to be the central part of the part of the love of the good that is given the name "eros," one is left to wonder whether philosophy and poetry are not complementary parts of some generally unrecognized whole. If this is indeed the case, then the partiality of the pseudo-wholes of both "love" and poetry might be defined principally by the fact that they have been illegitimately separated from philosophy. It is certainly the case that for Plato poetry is ancillary to the practice and representation of philosophy. It is also true, however, that Athens is distinguished both by being animated by a nonphilosophical "eros" and its having been shaped by the teachings of a poetry independent of any subordinate relation to philosophy, namely, tragedy and comedy.

Having identified what is generally called eros with a certain part of love of the good, Diotima goes on to offer a refutation of the position of Aristophanes, according to which eros is to be understood primarily in terms of the love of one's own (205e–206a). By means of this refutation, she explains to young Socrates precisely what part of the whole of love of the good has been identified by the many with eros and thus given the name of the whole. Vulgar eros, she insists, is not love of one's other half or of what one believes to be one's own. Human beings, she claims, love neither the half, nor the whole unless they believe them to be good. Her proof for this claim is that human beings are willing to suffer their own hands or feet to be cut off if they believe they are no good. Though it is certainly true that a man may be willing to undergo amputation of a gangrened limb, this is precisely in recognition of the fact that only by these means will he save himself or what is his own, albeit in a mutilated condition. The example, therefore, might serve equally well to support the claim that human beings are so attached to what they believe to be their own that they prefer to live as "halves" or in a mutilated and crippled condition if this is what they understand to be required to sustain what is most of all their own. The mutilated of Diotima's example seem to be identical to the ignorant who, though neither beautiful nor good, nonetheless hold the opinion that this is sufficient for themselves (204a)—that is, with the bad and the ugly who are self-satisfied. Though it may be true that all men in one sense desire to make the good their own, it is equally true that, for this very reason, they are strongly inclined to take what they believe to be their own to be the good and to resist, on the basis of this belief, all attempts to improve them.

Not only is vulgar eros itself a part pretending to be the whole, but it falls prey to misunderstanding the goal it seeks in similar terms. It is subject to mistaking one's own partial condition for a complete and perfect condition. Thus, the love of the good, when wholly separated from the love of the beautiful, is neither a principle of truth seeking nor of self-knowledge: vulgar eros and self-awareness or a knowledge of one's own neediness are not conjoined. Apart from the love of the beautiful and its generation of an

awareness of one's own defectiveness and incompleteness in comparison to the perfection and completeness of the beloved, the self-interested character of the desire for the good becomes a principle of self-delusion and spurious self-satisfaction.[33] Any attempt to grasp the truth of the good directly must end in "blindness."[34]

In the sequel, in which she offers her account of those who are ordinarily called lovers, Diotima will confirm that this tendency to confuse one's own with the good is indeed the hallmark of vulgar eros. She will add, however, a significant qualification in this regard. Human beings, she now insists, not only love the good to be their own, "but always, as well" (206a). She goes on to interpret this to mean that they seek to immortalize their own life, whether good or bad (207d, 208e). Her correction of Aristophanes' account of vulgar eros, therefore, seems to amount to suggesting that love of one's own can only be understood as love of some version of the good—those who love their own, no matter how bad it may be in reality, do so only in the mistaken belief that it is sufficient or good—and that the form of love that Aristophanes and all of his fellow Athenians at the banquet identified as eros—namely, politicized eros—must include not only a love of one's own as the good, but the longing to immortalize one's own, as well. Phaedrus, Eryximachus, and Agathon were all correct to emphasize this point and Aristophanes—in arguing that eros is derivative of the law and the gods, that is, political—was wrong to abstract from the concern with immortality. The love of the specious good that the many call eros, therefore, can be understood equally well in terms of the attempt to defend one's own against the presumed alienness and evil of death.

With the turn to immortality, the beautiful reenters her argument, not as an object of love in its own right, but as a means to the acquisition of the good (206b–207a). The beautiful becomes an instrument to rendering immortal what is thought to be one's own under the false aspect of the good. Putting the beautiful to use in this way is the "deed" of those who are ordinarily called lovers (206b). But the beautiful necessarily serves as a means in this endeavor, according to Diotima, because immortality can only be combined with one's own through the process of generation of offspring—whether those of body or those of soul—and the beautiful, she insists, is indispensable for the conception of offspring.

In her description of the utility of the beautiful in this regard, Diotima weirdly combines the effects of the beautiful upon the body and the soul in its making conception possible (206c–e). She appears to do so because she is about to attempt to show that, with the exception of Aristophanes' speech, the truth of all of the accounts of eros offered by the guests at Agathon's banquet can be understood properly only in the light of the phenomenon of reproduction. On the face of it, this is hardly plausible, given that of those four accounts only that of Agathon mentioned sexual reproduction and did

so only in passing (197a). Diotima, however, makes it central. In doing so, she seems to follow the leads of Phaedrus and Eryximachus' speeches that pretended to be able to ground Athens' political life in nature and cosmology. Contrary to the thrust of all her remarks in the first part of her speech, Diotima now appears to wish to argue that the city at its peak as exhibited in Athens can only be understood in terms of a derivation from cosmological first principles or an account of the nature of becoming as a whole. Thus, she begins with a revision of Eryximachus' starting point: nature must be understood not in abstraction from, but precisely on the basis of sexual reproduction (207a–208b).[35] She claims that the beasts, in following "the way of becoming," exhibit the eros that leads "the mortal nature to seek, as far as possible, to be forever and immortal" (207d). This, it seems, is the manner in which eros binds together the whole of mortal and immortal. The "eros" that effects this bond, however, is no longer daimonic—it has nothing to do with philosophy—and whatever was left of the gods has been reduced the adjective "divine" that is said to be "absolutely the same forever" (208b) and is set in contrast to the way of sexual reproduction whereby the immortal is made to be present in the mortal.

It is extremely difficult to conceive of animals, which are seemingly perfectly unaware of their own mortality, pursuing immortality as an object so desirable that they are willing to lay down their lives for the offspring that are supposed to secure it (207b). And even if it were the case that all animals sought immortality, dying for one's offspring would hardly put it within their grasp: offspring guarantee, at best, the longevity of the species. Rather animals seem to rear their young and risk their lives to preserve them on account of a primitive form of love of one's own, the same sort of love that leads a mother to love her child "warts and all."

Despite Socrates' incredulity regarding her assertions (208b–c)—and this is the last time that Socrates speaks in his "dialogue" with Diotima—Diotima proceeds to pretend to derive human beings' love of honor, the description of which she borrows from Phaedrus' account, from "the way of becoming" of animal eros (208c–e). Love of honor is simply a version of the love of immortality ostensibly displayed by the beasts: "all do all things for the sake of an immortal remembering of their virtue and a famous reputation of this sort" (208d). The flaw in her deduction is made clear by the fact that this universal statement stands in stark contradiction to her prior universal statement that "all human beings conceive both in terms of body and soul" (206c): there is no conception, birth, or nurturing of offspring in the case of the lover of honor's pursuit of immortal fame through virtue. And whereas the beauty of this virtue can be said to be a means to immortality, the beautiful, pace Diotima's former assertions, plays no role in animal reproduction. The incapacity of animals to cognize the beautiful parallels their incapacity to become aware of their own mortality

and so to be concerned with the attempt to transcend it: both require the presence of mind.

We may conclude, therefore, that Diotima effort to derive the human in the sense of the political from subhuman nature in the sense of a process of reproduction that she extends from animal life to all of bodily becoming is a pretense merely. On the contrary, as becomes clear when she affects to understand soul and mind along these same lines (207e–208a), she has rather offered an account of animal life in terms of the human and not the human on the merely political level, but rather on the plane of the longing for eternity associated with the desire to know. She reminds us of the eternal precisely in her resounding silence concerning it in attempting to understand the possession of the sciences in terms of a continual process of reproduction whereby the forgotten learning is replaced, through study, by an exactly similar "offspring" in the mind (208a): even if it were possible to understand knowing itself as a process of continual becoming on the basis of a kind of reproduction, the object known, in the case of the sciences, seems to possess a singular constancy: it does not appear to share in the process of becoming, but is thought to be unchanging or eternal in its truth.[36] The longing for what is eternal exhibited in the pursuit of, for example, the mathematical sciences, Diotima appears to suggest, is as much the root of the longing for immortality—as the recoil before death. And this longing, therefore, is something that is specific to human beings and not genuinely ingredient in animal "eros": it too has mind as its precondition. She further suggests, therefore, that Athens' longing for immortality on the political plane is in part derivative of the longing for the eternal on the cognitive plane. Only in this way can the activity of the Pausanian educative pederast—consisting as it does in an effort to render the political virtues of moderation and justice immortal through their transmission to the young (209a–c)—be understood. The political educator attempts to endow the political virtues with the aspect of eternity ostensibly possessed by the truths of the mathematical sciences. He must make this attempt not only because it is a requirement of political expediency, but because human beings necessarily associate education with the transmission of the truth and the truth with the eternal.

Contrary to the assumptions of Eryximachus as representative of pre-Socratic science, according to which the city and political life can be derived from or reduced to the subhuman, Diotima has thus far argued that the "eros" at the core of the political life of Athens—the longing for immortality—can only be understood in the light of that of which it is a fragmentary apparition, namely, philosophy and its longing for the eternal. Putting together the arguments of Diotima's speech with our conclusions regarding Eryximachus' account, one may say that Plato indicates that the pre-Socratics failed to understand the city insofar as they reduced it to

ostensibly subpolitical and subhuman principles that were in fact projections of the fundamental elements of political life—the arts and the law—and abstracted from that alone in the light of which the city and its limitations can be made intelligible: their own philosophizing. One can see the truth of the city, Diotima therefore suggests, only in relation to that which transcends the city.

If the city necessarily misinterprets the longing for eternity as a longing for immorality, however, it nevertheless fails with equal necessity to provide for the satisfaction of this politicized desire. Not even the founder and lawgiver, the first principle of political life, to whom Diotima appears to link the greatest poets—Homer and Hesiod (209c–d)—can be said to achieve what the city promises. For the speeches of the law, intended as they are to be universally applicable to all kinds of men and determined by the contingencies of a particular time and place, are too bound by the constraints of political necessity to represent the individual thoughts and soul of the legislator. At best, the legislator preserves as much of himself as the lover of honor: his name lives on. Since the educative pederast is not concerned to immortalize his own life, but rather the existence of the noble virtues, it proves to be the case that only the poet is able to combine his own with immortality in the way that all those lovers of "the good" who are called "lovers" strive to do.[37] He does so precisely through the exercise of an art of writing that permits him, on the one hand, to transcend the temporal limitations of even the most long-lived political order and, on the other hand, to preserve something of his mind and soul beyond his own brief span of life (209d). He is able to separate his art from the city and through his art the soul from the body such as to guarantee the immortalization of his own thoughts and speeches. The poet is the paradigmatic instance, by this account, of vulgar eros. Agathon, it seems, was right, according to Diotima, to associate the poets with the effort to immortalize the "self," but wrong in his belief that this had anything at all to do with self-divinization and the beautiful gods: the gods are completely absent from Diotima's account of the poet and his aims.

The inclusion of the lawgiver alongside the poet in the final, Agathonian portion of the second part of Diotima's speech seems to be explained not primarily by her desire to reflect Agathon's conjunction of the poet's art with the "captain's" art of rule, but by her intention to reveal the twin sources of the peculiar character of the city of Athens. Though the love of honor and pederastic eros in conjunction with moral instruction are hardly unique to Athens—this combination is prevalent, for example, in Sparta and Crete as well[38]—the distinctive character of this mix in Athens seems to be accounted for by the fact that there the two are not simply derivative of the law and its practices, but are suffused with the teachings of the poets (209a).

It is hard to understand precisely how the poets have exercised this effect upon Athens, however, without reference to the way in which the gods of the poets have partially displaced, and, therefore, partially fused with, the gods of the city and its law. The immortal youth and beauty of the gods of the poets (i.e., their status as objects of erotic attraction) has combined with the punitive power of their justice (their status as an object of terror). Similarly, the transpolitical and universal character of the gods of the poets (they are not the possession of any particular city) have fused with the local power of the law and the gods of the law. The result seems to be the blending of the longing for the beautiful, the struggle for empire, and the love of youth such that Athens strives to assert a universal rule over all other cities through a combination of terror and an attraction to her beauty and this ambition finds its ultimate incarnation in a youth of extraordinary beauty and unsurpassed military capacity who fills the entire city with an erotic longing for "distant sights and contemplations" and "eternal reward."[39] The Athenians are the greatest example of the longing to transform what is one's own into the eternal.

Diotima, however, has deprived the poets of their beautiful gods and left us to wonder at the means by which their influence upon Athens has been exerted.[40] In separating the poets from their gods, she seems merely to have followed through on the tendency of all of the previous speakers at the banquet insofar as they are representative of Athenian enlightenment. That the issue of enlightenment is central to her portrayal of Athens is made clear by her giving the Eryximachean moment of her account priority in the order of presentation. Her Athens is the Athens in which the after effects of pre-Socratic philosophy have transformed both the city and her poets such that her greatest statesman boasts of his association with Anaxagoras[41] and her greatest tragic and comic poets—Euripides and Aristophanes—debunk and ridicule the gods in plays that form the center of one of her most important religious festivals.

The Athens of Socrates' contemporaries is an Athens in which science in an alliance with enlightened poetry has substantially undermined lawful piety. As a consequence, what formerly stood in the way of the identification of one's own with the good, namely, a belief in the existence of gods of superhuman perfection and beauty before which human beings are reduced to a state of humble awe and shame, has given way under the pressure of "novel ideas" to a shamelessness and daring unchecked by reverence or fear. But, with the elimination of this ceiling over their thoughts and actions, that is, liberated from the fetters of piety and shame, the Athenians have been freed to vaunt their ambition beyond all bounds. At the same time, with the elimination of the immortality of the gods as a horizon for human life, they have been thrown into a subphilosophical version of Socrates' plague time: the after effect of the decline of the immortals upon the citizens of

Athens is a heightened awareness of their own mortality. The reaction to this newly immediate sense of finitude seems to be the effort extolled by Pericles to leave behind "undying memorials of both evil and good,"[42] that is, in the wake of the retreat of the beautiful gods to assert the dignity of what is their own—their humanity as they understand it—by attempting to combine it with the deathlessness once attributed to the vanished gods. Pious shame before the gods has been displace by the shameless imitation of the gods. This is the Athens in which Socrates found a refuge for seventy years.

However, though Athens may come into her own as a precondition for Socratic philosophy only with the decline of the beautiful gods, Homer and Hesiod—the only poets whom Diotima mentions by name—came into their own through, and were largely responsible for, the ascendancy of these same gods. Since, however, Diotima has joined philosophy and the beautiful gods in the first part of her speech, she compels us to call into question the tenability of her division between poetry and philosophy—at least as she has presented it thus far—and to reassign poets on the level of Homer and Hesiod to a place next to philosophy and with the beautiful gods in her class of the love of the beautiful. If Homer and Hesiod belong with philosophy, however, then one must conclude that poets in the proper sense fabricate and employ their gods not in the interest of self-immortalization, but in the pursuit of understanding the nature of man and through this the nature of the whole.[43]

The specific character of Athens, however, has been determined not primarily by Hesiod and Homer, who after all are non-Athenian, but by the presence of poets such as Agathon and Aristophanes, the tragic and comic poets in her midst. Tragedy and comedy then represent the versions of poetry to which Diotima pointed with her appeal to the issue of making as an example of a part masquerading as a whole. Tragedy and comedy are independent, partial poetry, that is, poetry that has detached itself from its essential and original union with philosophy and forged an accommodation to the city and its aims.[44] Aristophanes' and Agathon's misunderstandings of eros and its longing, of what is one's own, and of the beautiful and the good, are political misunderstandings. Diotima's argument thus far has, therefore, been devoted to showing not only the falsehood of Agathon's and Aristophanes' understandings of eros, but the falsehood of their understandings of poetry as well. Both are partial and so distorted. But it is precisely in the city of Athens in which these partial and distorted versions of eros and poetry rule.

If Diotima has implied that, on the highest level, the differences between poetry and philosophy are nugatory, the plausibility of this suggestion has yet to be substantiated. That it can be substantiated is made dubious by the fact that, in depriving the poets of their gods and leaving them only with their art of writing, Diotima has pointed to a seemingly more essential

point of discrimination between poetry and philosophy: for poetry writing and its "reification" of speech is indispensable; philosophy, however, can live without it. Socrates did not write. This implies, however, that the difficulty of assigning poetry to either side of the division that Diotima has effected reflects the ambiguous nature of poetry itself for which the art of writing is a precondition. Poetry as, on the one hand, pursuing knowledge of man belongs with Socratic philosophy and as, on the other hand, appealing to and shaping the passions of the great multitude of men belongs with the city and its law.

What Diotima will show in the third and last portion of her speech is precisely why it is that Socrates' erotics found the widest room for play in Athens as the city in which a nonphilosophic eros and an independent poetry rule. She will demonstrate how Athens at her peak and in her decline was the terrain upon which Socrates could exercise most freely his hunting the beings while hunting the beautiful youths or where the "correct practice of pederasty" (211b), as Diotima calls it, was most at home.

Given that the conclusion of his speech is explicitly concerned with the correct practice of pederasty, it would seem that here in the end Socrates, through Diotima, portrays his erotics in its pure form, free of the art of writing as incompatible with the dialogic character of Socrates' coupling with the young. That some pressure is operating to effect a radical distortion in the presentation of his erotics, however, becomes clear with the most cursory inspection of the conclusion of his speech.

The end of Diotima's speech is not only the description of the complete initiation into erotics, but is supposed to make possible the completion of Socrates' initiation into erotics as well, that is, effect the transmission of Diotima's knowledge of erotics to her pupil (210a). This description in its series of ascending stages, however, in no way resembles what she herself has been pursuing with Socrates. Her "initiation" is built around displaying the division between philosophical eros and what is ordinarily called eros. There is no attempt by her to make an ascent from the latter to the former and, accordingly, the nature of philosophical eros is presented first. Moreover, her entire account is focused upon understanding the nature of things human and, therefore, presupposes a turn to the human things as a serious object of inquiry. Her description of this "complete initiation," by contrast, pretends to reveal the manner in which one gradually ascends from nonphilosophical to philosophical eros through a series of stages—from love of beautiful body, to love of soul, to beholding and being with the beautiful itself (210a–211b). There is, however, no explanation of how one stage leads to the next through a necessity internal to eros and, in fact, the transitions are made not on the basis of eros, but through appeals to shame, honor, and contempt, first for any concern with beautiful human bodies (210b) and finally with the human as such (210c–d, 211e). Accordingly, the third

and final stage of the ascent has as its premise a "permanent turn" away from the human things toward the "vast sea of the beautiful" (210d). As a necessary consequence at its presumed peak Diotima's account abstracts from eros altogether: the beautiful is never said to be an object of love, but only of contemplation (210d, 212a).

That something is awry in the presentation of these apparently distinct stages of an ascent is also indicated by the fact that the lover of body is to express his love not in silent copulation, but by generating "beautiful speeches" there (210b). Likewise the contemplator of the beautiful who is supposed to have left all the "smallness" of the human behind and to enjoy an immediate cognition of the beautiful itself is said to generate "magnificent and beautiful speeches in unenvious philosophy" (210d). The sharing of speeches that is appropriate only to the central stage of this three stage ascent, namely, that of love of soul wherein the lover cares for the beloved by "engendering and seeking speeches that will make the young better" (210c), has permeated the entire account. Though love of soul is ostensibly absent from the first stage and transcended in the last, its centrality for the account as a whole is indicated by the presence, at all levels, of speech, which presupposes both an intercourse between souls and the being together of soul and body (210b).

Finally, one perceives difficulties operative in this section of Diotima's speech in her account of the ultimate end of the practice of correct pederasy. Her exposition of the completion of erotics in the correct practice of pederasty is divided into three sections. The first outlines the three-stage ascent to a single science transcending all the other "beautiful sciences" (210a–d). The second explains the nature of the object of this science, namely, the monoeidetic beautiful itself (210e–211b), and the third the effects of seeing and being with the beautiful itself upon the soul of the initiate (211b–212a). According to the first two parts of this account, the beautiful itself, as the highest object of cognition, is *the* final end of all erotics. According to the last part, however, the beautiful itself is instrumental—as Diotima had previously insisted all beauty is—to a process of giving birth: the initiate, through his encounter with the beautiful itself, "gives birth to and makes grow true virtue" (212a). The beautiful is instrumental to "true virtue" or the good of the soul. The account then, though seeming to put the beautiful at the peak of the ascent in leaving behind the human, is in fact ambiguous as to whether the beautiful itself or the human good constitutes that summit. If it is in fact the latter, then this too argues for the priority of the central stage of the three-stage ascent: only in that central stage is it said that one must "seek speeches" that make the souls of the young "better."

All of these difficulties and distortions at first sight appear to be determined by a single factor: Socrates has taken the whole of his erotics, fragmented it into its parts and portrayed these separate parts as if they were stages along a path of development. He has made temporally successive what

is simultaneous in the whole or he has self-consciously performed upon his own erotics the operation that Eryximachus unreflectively performed upon the Heraclitian one. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes evident that there is a second distorting cause is at work in Socrates' account, as well. Socrates' erotics or his correct practice of pederasty seems to include two aspects. On the one hand, Socrates pairs up with certain "beautiful youths" of a nonphilosophic nature who are attractive to him as conditions for conducting an inquiry into one or another of "the beings," that is, one or another particular and partial problem, for example, Charmides' nature as an occasion for raising and addressing the question "What is moderation?"[45] On the other hand, Socrates pairs up with the rare youth of a genuinely philosophical nature in the interest of encouraging within him the coming to be of philosophy, for example, Plato. The first is devoted to the pursuit and understanding of a particular problem as such—it is philosophizing as a means to understanding and self-understanding. The second is directed to the preservation of philosophy itself. Plato portrays numerous examples of the former; neither Plato, nor his Socrates ever portrays the latter. What appears here at the end of Socrates' speech to be such a portrait is in fact the portrayal of the cultivation of philosophy in the soul of a youth of an appropriate nature *in terms of* Socrates' pairing with a nonphilosophical nature.

The nonphilosophical nature in question is that of Agathon, whose character and even whose name make him the perfect occasion for such a construction. Agathon is he who has erroneously been given the name of the good—he is the beautiful as mistaken for the good, the sophist as the shadow of the philosopher. He is a sophist, however, who claims that his wisdom finds its source in eros. He is the shadow not of philosophy in general, but of Socratic philosophy in particular. Socrates' portrayal of his erotics as culminating in the science of the beautiful itself is, therefore, a portrayal of his erotics in Agathonian terms and this science and its object belong, strictly speaking, to Agathon and not to Socrates. But this means that the distortions of Socrates' account are ultimately attributable to Agathon or the good in name alone or the beautiful. The fragmenting of the whole of Socratic erotics into a series of discrete and separable parts is the effect of the object of that science that he places at the summit of these parts after having arranged them into a sequential or temporal order: the beautiful itself.[46] The beautiful is the "cause" of the detachability of the parts from the whole. It is the principle whereby the partial takes on the appearance of completeness or wholeness and the dependent the guise of self-sufficiency.[47] As such, the beautiful is the condition of the possibility of the parts being taken up and treated separately from the whole. It is, therefore, the precondition for the starting point of Socratic philosophy and indeed all inquiry, which, though directed to knowledge of the whole,

must begin as an inquiry into the part or a partial inquiry and proceed, as it were, sequentially from one partial inquiry to the next.

What Socrates' treatment of this question in Agathonian terms allows for, however, is the appearance of the beautiful as not only the principle of the separability of the parts from the whole, but of their togetherness as well. Agathon embodies the beautiful not as it is exhibited in the more or less self-evidently partial virtues of courage or moderation, but in the apparently comprehensive whole of virtue: the noble. Accordingly, Socrates describes the science of the beautiful itself as that which both transcends and encompasses the plurality of all other partial "beautiful sciences" (210c–d) and the object of that science—the beautiful itself in its pure and eternal beauty—as that which transcends all other "beautiful things," that is, the objects of the beautiful sciences, while permitting these beautiful things, through their participation in it, to be beautiful (211b).

When Socrates describes the beautiful as "alone by itself and with itself" we recognize the terms by which he ordinarily identifies the character of an idea and when he goes on to insist that it is "always being of a single form (*monoeides*)" (211b), he seems to provide us with a clue to the essence of what it is to be an idea. An idea is the look of unity or the appearance of being a monad. The ideas are the parts of the whole under the specious aspect of self-sufficiency and completeness. In attributing to the beautiful itself the essence of the idea, however, Socrates indicates that the beautiful itself is, as it were, the idea of what it is to be an idea.[48]

If the beautiful, however, is the source of the independence or apparent independence of the ideas, it cannot be that which compromises the independence or apparent independence of the ideas. This must rather be the good that cannot, therefore, strictly speaking, be an idea. It is not one of the beings. It is "beyond being."[49] The good, we recall, is what Socrates called the hidden cause of the binding together of the whole that he sought unsuccessfully to uncover throughout his philosophical life. If, then, the beautiful is the manifest separability of the parts and the good the immanifest cause of their being together, the beautiful in its relation to the good would account for the fact that those things that appear as if they must be separate or two cannot be separate or two and that which appears as if it must be independent and one cannot be independent and one. Furthermore, since Socrates or Diotima portrays the beautiful itself as if it were an object of "intellectual intuition" or immediate intelligibility—it need only be "seen" in order to be known or for one to "be together with it" (212a)—the beautiful must be the appearance of immediate intelligibility that hides a deeper unintelligibility: what appears to be a one, simple and indivisible, proves to conceal two that cannot be understood together. Conversely, the good must represent the appearance of unintelligibility that masks an intelligible core: what appears to be two, independent and immiscible, proves to be comprehensible only as together.

The great god Eros is an example of the former, Poros and Penia of the latter. The truth of the former is the separation of perplexity or knowledge of ignorance from the overcoming of perplexity or wisdom; the truth of the latter, the togetherness of resource and need in Socrates' eros.

The love of the beautiful as operative in Socratic erotics, therefore, must be made evident in his attraction to the various interlocutors whose soul-type as expressed in their fundamental opinions represents the starting points or germs of the "beautiful and magnificent speeches" that Socrates articulates, his "beautiful sciences," as Diotima calls them. So the starting point of the science of the beautiful itself appears to be Agathon's opinion that the good and the beautiful are one. The love of the beautiful must be Socrates' attraction to an illusory completion or wholeness, that is, Socrates' attraction to a pseudo-solution to a fundamental problem. The love of the good, on the other hand, must be that which allows him to track down what, though necessarily required in the formulation of that science, is nevertheless inconsistent with its starting point.[50] The desire for the genuine whole is that which reveals the inharmonious and incoherent in the elaboration of the spurious whole founded upon a partial first principle. The former is the source of Socrates' self-forgetfulness before the beautiful, the latter the source of his self-knowledge, that is, the self-reflection ingredient in his knowledge of ignorance. Without the specious divisions of opinion or the pseudo-unities of the beautiful, however, Socratic inquiry could not commence and Socrates' self-knowledge would prove to be impossible. Diotima originally seemed to identify love of the beautiful with self-forgetfulness and love of the good in its self-interested character with self-awareness. She then implied that the love of the good divorced from the love of the beautiful must inevitably be a cause of self-misunderstanding. She has now clarified the necessity that the love of the beautiful and the love of the good be yoked if understanding and self-understanding are to be possible. It is possible to properly determine the character of the good and the character of what is one's own only by way of indirection through an inquiry into the beautiful. Only the ambiguity at the root of eros, its being directed both to the beautiful and the good, makes possible philosophy and its self-understanding.

As we have remarked, in the third and final section of the close of his speech, Socrates reveals that seeing and being with the beautiful itself is the indispensable condition for "giving birth to" and "causing to grow" "true virtue." The beautiful becomes the means to the exercise of "true virtue," which, in the immediate context, seems to refer to the acquisition of wisdom as the result of the ascent through the beautiful sciences to the science of sciences that has as its object the beautiful itself. In the *Phaedo*, however, Socrates contrasts true virtue with the false coin of demotic virtue[51] and suggests that the former must be understood to be that which genuinely provides for the good of the soul, namely, philosophy.[52] If, however, the beautiful is

thus of indispensable *utility* in securing the human good, and we recall that Socrates' question regarding utility was the starting point in shifting the inquiry toward the question of the good and love of the good (204c), then it seems that the beautiful has taken on the aspect of the good. Under this aspect, however, the beautiful itself must serve to relate one to another and this is indicated in the apparently incoherent claim that one could "see and be with" the beautiful that is "alone by itself and with itself" and "unaffected in any way at all" (212a, 211b). Diotima or Socrates must be hinting at the way in which the beautiful, in Socrates' practice of erotics, serves as a bond between Socrates and his interlocutor: the "seeing" and attraction to the beautiful beloved are the starting point for Socrates' "being with" the beloved in speech while the beauty of the speech that Socrates formulates in his coupling with the beloved attracts the beloved to Socrates: the beloved unavoidably mistakes Socrates' portrait of the beloved for Socrates himself and so Socrates as lover for Socrates as the object of love.[53] Put differently, what binds Socrates to his interlocutor is the beautiful idea and the science formulated to articulate it, a science that, in appearing to solve the particular problem at hand—for example, what is moderation?—simultaneously appears to offer the solution to the most comprehensive problems and so resolve Socrates' knowledge of ignorance into wisdom. The full articulation of this science, however, simultaneously shows the incoherence and limitation of this apparently coherent and comprehensive science and the partiality and dependence of the ostensibly self-sufficient and independent idea that is its subject matter. Socrates is thereby returned to the truth concealed behind the idea—namely, the fundamental problem—and to his knowledge of ignorance as the reality hidden behind the appearance of wisdom. The manifestation of the falsehood of the wisdom of the interlocutor through the refutation of that wisdom is the manifestation of the truth of knowledge of ignorance and the display of the partiality of the idea is the discovery of the problem, of, for example, moderation, in its necessary relation to the comprehensive structure of fundamental problems.

If this is the character of Socrates' erotics that Diotima portrays in an image at the close of her speech, how then is Athens an indispensable precondition of its practice? Socrates was able to find, within the seemingly narrow compass of the city of Athens, a collection of young men who, in the variety and complexity of their soul-types, could serve as the starting points for the series of inquiries into the plurality of the beings. One is tempted to attribute the cause of such variety to Athens' democratic regime and Socrates himself lends some confirmation to this hypothesis in the *Republic* (557a–d). This, however, would not show how Athens in particular, rather than any other democratic polity, was requisite to Socrates' philosophizing and it is evident to anyone acquainted with the modern liberal democracies that a

democratic polity can enforce a conformity of character nearly as oppressive as that of the Spartan oligarchy.

It would appear, then, that one can explain the remarkable plurality of individual types to be found within Athens only by reference to the fact that Athens' democratic regime has been infused with the after effects of the gods of the poets. Agathon and Alcibiades, who is shortly to make his entrance in the *Symposium*, are cases in point. Having abandoned all reverence for the gods, they have become imitators of those gods. In the wake of the collision of the Athenian enlightenment and the gods of the poets, the Athenian youth strive to effect in deed what the poet's effected in speech alone, namely, to give the ideas human shape by transforming themselves into the incarnate embodiment of one or another of these ideas.[54] The plurality of such gods ensures that, in their decline, they will encourage and allow to flourish a plurality of soul types. As the *Phaedrus* has it, each beloved's soul-type corresponds to a member of the Olympian pantheon (246d–247e, 252e–253b).

In Socrates' erotics, then, the twin sources of the gods of the poet meets and fuse: from the side of the interlocutor the personification of a concept, from that of Socrates the divinization of the beautiful beloved, that is, the articulation of a comprehensive science on the basis of this "concept." It would appear then that Socrates, pace the implications of Diotima's speech, is at least a creator of a renewed version of the gods of the poets. He exercises, in some sense, the art of the poet, if while nevertheless lacking the poet's art of writing. The gods of the poets do, after all, find their proper employment in Socrates' erotic art. The gods of Socrates' fabrication, however, are all, from the side of his Athenian interlocutors, manifestations of Athens herself or the articulation of the "attributes" of the beautiful god Poros. Socrates' employment of the gods of the poets is identical to his employment of Athens as the vehicle for his inquiry into the beings.

Still, Socrates' elaboration of a science on the basis of the soul-type of the interlocutor (his "making of gods") is simultaneously the refutation of that science (or the unmaking of those gods). Unlike the poets, Socrates seems to have no attachment to the gods he fabricates. He eliminates Poros almost in the same breath through which he conjures him into being. He, therefore, lacks the love of one's own that Aristophanes confused with eros and that all poets seem to feel in relation to their creations.[55] In truth, however, these "gods" belong not to Socrates, but to his interlocutor and what Socrates discovers in his intercourse with the interlocutor is not wisdom but knowledge of ignorance as that which is genuinely his own. Only in Socrates' case, then, is the "generation" of his own by means of the beautiful identical to making the good his own. This is the truth of eros and "eros is always this"; it is not "of the good being one's own forever" (206b).

Enlightened Athens and the twilight of the gods of the poets within Athens is the precondition, then, for Socrates' practice of erotics. Even if, *per impossibile*, such a transient state of peak and imminent decline could last, it could not outlast Socrates' putting it to use. As Athens falls, leaving neither precedent nor imitator in her wake, so Socrates and his unrepeatable and irretrievable erotics perishes with her. It would appear, then, that the fiction of Diotima's transmission of erotics to Socrates is fiction merely: the "daimonic" capacity that was the basis of Socrates' erotic art was part of his idiosyncratic nature and has been possessed by no one before or after him. The truth of Eros the great daimon binding mortal and immortal together seems to be found in the way in which Socrates' erotics as radically contingent and finite proves to be the way to the discovery of the "eternal and necessary," that is, the structure of the fundamental and permanent problems. Only the philosopher can put together the eternal with his own and he does this precisely by eschewing immortality and pursuing the "practice of dying and being dead."[56] This is perhaps the most striking example in the *Symposium* of the way in which what seems to be perfectly separate and immiscible must in fact be understood as necessarily together.

The reality of Socrates' portrayal of Diotima as transmitting her erotics to him, however, is the *Symposium* as Plato's portrayal of Socrates' eros. Plato was able to preserve Socratic erotics not because Socrates transmitted his idiosyncratic art to him, but because Socrates cultivated a youth who not only possessed a mind equal to his own, but, if he lacked Socrates' unique capacity, also possessed a capacity that Socrates lacked and, indeed, possessed it as no one has before or since. For through the poetic power of his art of writing, Plato was able to provide a complete representation of Socrates and his erotics and by these means ensure that Socrates' unique and unrepeatable union of political philosophy and erotics remains the problem at the heart of philosophy and its self-understanding. Plato's art of writing is the alternative to eros as the "co-worker" with human nature that Socrates hints at in the last lines of his speech (212b). Plato's art could not have accomplished its work, however, if Socrates and his erotic art had not come before. Plato safeguarded the erotic Socrates as the paradigm of the philosopher, who, as such, both transcends and defines or comprehends the "class."[57] His works are "those of a Socrates become beautiful and new."

EIGHT

ALCIBIADES: DIVINE SOCRATES

If in Socrates' speech the beautiful gods have effectively been separated from the city and its justice, Plato, with the entrance of Alcibiades, puts them together once again. Alcibiades makes his appearance not only drunk and supported by his "human beings," but crowned with violets and ivy (212e). The crown of violets recalls Pindar's description of a personified Athens (echoed by Aristophanes in his *Knights*),[1] while the crown of ivy and his troop of attendant revelers deck Alcibiades out in the trappings of Dionysus. As the city of Athens, Alcibiades declares that reconciliation between Socrates and himself is impossible and that he "shall take my vengeance on you at another time" (213d), that is, he anticipates Socrates' trial and condemnation. As the beautiful god Dionysus, he judges the contest in wisdom or speeches between Socrates and Agathon and finds Socrates to be the victor (213e). Socrates' knowledge of ignorance is declared by the patron god of the poets to be superior to the wisdom of the poets, just as, according to Socrates at his trial, Apollo's oracle in its prophetic wisdom declared him to be the wisest simply.[2]

In putting together the gods of the poets with the city of Athens, Plato appears to mirror the way in which Homer's Athena has seemingly become instantiated in the city that bears her name. Alcibiades is the proper figure in this regard insofar as his ambition to embody a similar combination of the beauty and the justice of the gods allows him to appear as Athens incarnate. But if Pericles declared imperial Athens herself to be the true and proper object of the erotic longings of the Athenians,[3] his ward, as personifying Athens, inevitably became the beloved of her citizens. Diotima declared the "great god Eros" to have been constituted as the result of assigning the attributes of the beloved to the personified passion of love (204c). Alcibiades—the embodiment of the politicized eros of the Athenians or their imperial longings—appears to them to be the fulfillment of this same

eros. Alcibiades is, in the words of Aristophanes, the "great god Eros" as the "leader and general" (193b) of the tyrant city. He promises to fulfill completely their most far flung hopes.

Alcibiades thus represents a novel possibility in regard to piety for which Athens' daring and shamelessness paved the way: he is the incarnate god of "love" who displaces in his naked divinity both the hidden gods of the poets and the parochialism of the gods of the city and its law. Alcibiades' ambition, therefore, leads in the direction of a religious revolution in which the old gods and the old law are overturned through the advent of the universal tyranny of the god of love who strikes down all those who fail to succumb to his charms.

That this religious revolution remained merely a possibility in Athens case is attributable, according to Plato, not only to the Athenians' recoil before this possibility at the very moment of its realization, but to the intervention of Socrates who, Plato suggests, made it impossible for Alcibiades to understand himself in terms of the advent of a new divinity: he compelled him to recognize something superior to himself, namely, Socrates.

At the end of Socrates' speech, Aristophanes tries to offer a response to Socrates' refutation of his understanding of eros (212c). Plato, however, does not permit him the opportunity of a reply. His words are interrupted by the entrance of Alcibiades whose arrival is heralded first by a knocking at the door, then by the sound of a flute-girl, and finally by the voice of Alcibiades himself (212c–d). On the one hand, Plato makes the bond between Aristophanes' words and those of Alcibiades the sound of a flute-girl. He implies that both Aristophanes and Alcibiades are, like the prostitute, in the service of the multitude[4] and that both, as a consequence, conceive an envy of Socrates precisely on account of his freedom from such dependency and servitude.[5] On the other hand, Plato in effect makes Alcibiades speak in Aristophanes' turn, as Eryximachus had done previously.[6] Alcibiades' speech, however, will turn out to be a demonstration of how it is possible to both satisfy one's envy of Socrates—that is, "take one's vengeance upon him" while "raising a laugh" (214d–e)—and at the same time defend him by praising him to the skies, that is, show that he is far from being a corruptor of the Athenian youth through removing all limits on their tyrannical ambitions, but rather the only man in Athens who proved capable of moderating these ambitions in the most significant case. Plato gives us through Alcibiades' speech a picture of what Aristophanes' *Clouds* might have been. He allows his own Pheidippides to speak up in Socrates' defense against the Strepsiadian charge that he has corrupted him, if not that of "doing injustice to the gods."[7]

If Aristophanes' play, however, represents Socrates' relationship to the city and the gods through portraying Socrates' effects upon the city and its

lawful piety, Plato's "correction" of the play must represent this same relationship. Thus, though, on the one hand, Plato's art of writing permits the separation of Socrates' speeches from the Athenian context and, therefore, their preservation beyond the fall of Athens and Greek civilization; on the other hand, it preserves them in that context by putting them together with an "Athens in speech" of Plato's own devising. The *Symposium* ends with Plato's account of Socrates' effects upon "the tyrant city" in the form of Alcibiades' account of the effect that Socrates has had upon him.

With the transition to Alcibiades' speech, therefore, we move from the question of how Athens served as a precondition for Socrates' philosophizing to that of how Socrates' philosophizing affected Athens. As has already been suggested, this requires a simultaneous shift from a consideration of the question of the relationship between the beautiful and the good to that of the relationship between the beautiful and the just or the "good" as Alcibiades conceives it. According to Alcibiades' own testimony, Socrates' deepest effect upon him was caused by his demonstrating the impossibility of combining the beautiful and the just: he revealed to Alcibiades that his highest hope was thoroughly illusory. In the wake of his disillusionment, however, Alcibiades became convinced that Socrates alone embodied the truth of the beautiful that he understands to be identical with the truth of the divine: according to Alcibiades' drunken praise, Socrates is the one true, if hidden, god (216d–217a).

Alcibiades enters Agathon's banquet on the condition that all the others present agree to join him in drinking, since at the moment they are sober and "this cannot be allowed." He interprets this to mean that they have agreed to make him the ruler (*archonta*) of the drinking (213e). Alcibiades declares himself to be the duly constituted symposiarch[8] through a strange combination of democratic procedure and tyrannical decree.[9] Plato suggests that Athens is a peculiarly unstable combination of democracy and tyranny, a "symposium" in which all are drunk and the drunkest of the drunkards is leading.

To understand the significance of this suggestion, it is necessary to turn to the discussion of symposia and drunkenness in the first book of the *Laws*. Here the Athenian stranger, in explaining the truth of drunkenness and its effects, introduces an image of man in the form of a "divine puppet" (644d). He argues that the strings that pull this puppet and cause its motions are of two sorts: strong cords of iron and a weak cord of gold. The former he identifies with the passions, the latter with a calculation that, when it becomes the common opinion of the city, is called law (644e–645c). The roots of the passions and that over which calculation ranges in determining what is better and what is worse are present pleasures and pains and the expectation of future pleasures and pains. The latter two are identified with

the passions of boldness and fear (644c–d). The weakness of the golden cord of lawful calculation in its efforts to oppose "sufferings and other fears" (in enjoining, e.g., courage) and the most frequent and greatest pleasures (in enjoining, e.g., moderation) requires the aid of the strength of iron: the strength of the passions must be opposed with the strength of a passion allied with the law. The latter proves to be a species of fear, namely, shame: the fear in regard to opinion or reputation, "when we think we will be considered evil if we say or do anything that is not beautiful" (646e–647a). The lawgiver, therefore, honors shame with the name of "awe" and disparages shamelessness as a lack of awe, identifying it with "the greatest evil for everyone both in private and public life" (647a–b).

This honoring of shame with the sobriquet "awe" appears to reflect the lawgiver's recognition of a certain limitation in the strength of the influence shame may exercise and his consequent attempt to overcome this limitation. The fear of opinion or the attempt to preserve one's good reputation may indeed lead one to say and do what is beautiful when in public or under the eyes of one's fellow citizens, as Phaedrus argued in his speech. One calculates that a loss of reputation or a reputation for evil will lead one's fellow citizens to either shun or destroy one. But it will not exercise an equally strong pull in private.[10] The calculation instilled by lawful shame leads, therefore, merely to the covering over of vice or to the practice of vice with sufficient skill in concealment or to the opinion that vice unseen is not vice.[11] To ensure one's conformity to the injunctions of the law in private as well then requires instilling the belief that concealment or real privacy is effectively impossible because we are always under the scrutiny of the gods. Lawful calculation is joined not simply to shame, but to awe in that it is guided by the expectation of pains and pleasures meted out by the gods—divine reward and punishment. Man is a divine puppet insofar as the gods of the law are pulling his strings.

The calculation of the law, aided by the strength of shame and awe, is a hedonistic calculus—it persuades us to forgo the gratification of antinomian pleasures and suffer the pain of lawful constraint either through holding out the expectation of the pleasure of praise and the pain of disapprobation, or the expectation of the pleasure of divine reward and the pain of divine punishment. This, the stranger suggests, allows us to understand the lawful teaching regarding the law-abiding and the lawless man, namely, that the former is "better than himself" and the latter "worse than himself" (626e, 644b). The law-abiding man suffers the pain of lawful constraint in the anticipation of future pleasure, while the lawless man enjoys antinomian pleasure, but in the anticipation of a future pain of recompense.

What drunkenness amounts to, according to the stranger, is a return to a state resembling childhood through the removal of shame and awe and, therefore, the lawful calculation they support. Drunkenness removes lawful

opinions and "prudent thoughts" and strengthens the pleasures and pains associated with the thumotic and erotic passions (645d–e).

In arguing for the utility of reducing human beings to this pre-legal state, the Athenian stranger imagines a drink of fear that would have "the effect that the more one is willing to drink the more unfortunate one conceives oneself to be, fearing for oneself everything in the present and the future, until finally the most courageous human being experiences total terror" (647c–648a). Such a drug would be, he suggests, a boon in the effort to instill lawful courage insofar as one could throw oneself against the terrors instilled through intoxication and thus train in resisting their influence. So, the stranger argues, wine, which instills ever greater hope with each drink until finally one is "filled with freedom and total fearlessness" (649b), could be used in a training in facing and overcoming the greatest pleasures and shamelessness or in the instilling of lawful moderation.

Wine, the drink of hope, appears then to produce effects precisely contrary to the imagined drink of fear that at its maximum would instill, it would seem, a fear that "what one is is what one most despises,"[12] an intensification of the effects of shame according to which what one knows oneself to be in private is what one publicly acknowledges to be evil and ugly. On the contrary, the drink of hope eliminates shame altogether and "puffs one up" with an opinion of one's own power and wisdom and fills one with "complete license of speech so that one does not hesitate to say or do anything" (649a). The drink of fear would instill unmitigated pain and fear—one would suffer the pain of one's present state and the despair of any future improvement; whereas the drink of hope would instill unmitigated pleasure and boldness—one would enjoy the pleasure of one's current state with the prospect of a limitless future of enjoyment. If those pleasures were antinomian in character, it would fill one with the bold thought that such pleasures could be indulged with complete impunity.[13] This is why the stranger lists wealth, power, and beauty as intoxicants in this regard (649d).

On the brink of the greatest expansion of her imperial power, the citizens of enlightened Athens appear to be thoroughly inebriated with the drink of hope. The youth who appears as Athens incarnate, however, seems willing and able to drink them all under the table. Alcibiades' hopes far outstrip those of even the most intoxicated of his fellow citizens. Socrates portrays the character of these hopes in both the first and second *Alcibiades*: he seeks sovereignty not only over Athens and all the Greeks, but over Europe and Asia as well in order to prove that he is "deserving of being honored more than . . . anyone else who as ever existed . . . [and to] fill with [his] name and [his] power all mankind, so to speak."[14] Alcibiades hopes, through universal tyranny, to secure universal honor or to be admired and praised, not to say loved, by all. He will enjoy the antinomian pleasure of tyrannical rule with perfect impunity by having persuaded all men to love

and honor him for his beauty and virtue. Oddly, then, Alcibiades' seemingly perfectly lawless and shameless hopes appear to have as their ultimate ground the expectation of the pleasure of praise and the pain of disapprobation that is part and parcel to the shame and awe allied with lawful calculation. The apparent sobriety of the law has engendered in him the intoxications of tyrannical ambition. The shame and awe instilled by the justice of the gods of the law have produced the desire to imitate the shamelessness of the beautiful gods of the poets, but to combine such shamelessness with rule, the principle attribute of the just gods. Such is the character of the youth who has taken over the leadership of democratic Athens.

Athens, therefore, is far from conforming to the Athenian stranger's model for a properly conducted symposium. Judging from Alcibiades' account of the effects that Socrates has had upon him, one might conclude that Socrates, who alone among the symposiasts can, according to Alcibiades, maintain his sobriety no matter how much he is compelled to drink (214a, 219a), has taken up the Athenian stranger's challenge by attempting to introduce a certain level of "sobriety" into a soul completely intoxicated with the drink of hope. Without attempting to assert his right as the sober man amid drunkards to assume the office of symposiarch, Socrates appears to have intervened in an attempt to adjust the balance between order and disorder in the Athenian polity with the possible end in view of the preservation of Athens as a convenient seat for his philosophizing. He practices, it would seem, a Socratic version of Eryximachus' statesman-like medical art by means of an inverted version of Aristophanes' rhetorical soul-leading: instead of loosening the bonds of shame and self-contempt in Alcibiades' soul, he has strengthened them. It is certainly true that, according to Alcibiades, Socrates has tamped down his boundless aspirations and self-estimation by revealing to him his shameful and slavish condition (215e).[15] He seems to have mitigated the effects of Alcibiades' outsized hopes through administering doses of something like the equivalent of the drink of fear.

The Athenian stranger, however, had left ambiguous the true utility of the symposium for the sober man amid drunks (the man free of hope and fear) by offering two competing accounts of its purpose. On the one hand, he described it as a tool to reform the souls of the participants by somehow inducing in them a renewed sense of shame through a controlled indulgence in shamelessness. So Socrates first encourages and perhaps expands the scope of Alcibiades' hopes and ambitions before humbling him by demonstrating that he lacks completely the qualities most essential to their realization.[16] On the other hand, the stranger described it as a forum for the revelation of natures exposed through the shamelessness encouraged by wine drinking. If Socrates has intervened with Athens' drunken symposiarch with the latter as much as the former end in view, he has chosen to associate with Alcibiades because he finds in him the man in which the political nature

is at its peak and most unreservedly exposed. Alcibiades is the distillation of the symposium of Athens as the "theoria of Dionysus."[17] In this case, any effects upon Alcibiades (and Athens) that Socrates' investigations might produce would be incidental to their chief purpose.

Alcibiades' experience of his encounter with Socrates seems to mirror the ambiguity of Socrates' intentions in regard to his association with the young man. He understands their conversation both as a course in moral instruction and as culminating in the revelation of the truth about the nature of Socrates (219d). Strangely, however, he believes that the end of Socrates' moral education is not moral action but "idleness" in attending to Socrates' speeches (216a–b) and that he has glimpsed Socrates' nature not through his speeches but his deeds (216e, 217e). A certain sort of moral action is what he believes to distinguish Socrates' nature (216d): he is the truth of the moral man insofar as he lives up to in his deeds that to which all others pay mere lip service. Where one would expect moral instruction to lead to the deeds of moral virtue and speech to be the means to the discovery of nature, Alcibiades has confounded these. He dimly perceives that in Socrates' inquiry the examination of the opinions regarding moral virtue is inseperable from the revelation of nature, but he finds it impossible to follow Socrates in his understanding that the truth of moral virtue is revealed precisely not in deed, but in speech. That Socrates seeks intercourse with Alcibiades in order to instill a version of moral virtue in his soul is perhaps an opinion derived largely from Alcibiades' misunderstanding of Socrates' practice of erotics.

The immediate cause of Alcibiades offering a speech in praise of Socrates is Eryximachus. He speaks out against drinking at the end, as he had at the beginning of the banquet (214a–c). We are, therefore, at a new beginning. It would seem that we are in fact only now at this late stage in the proceedings in a position to address eros in terms of what is genuinely first regarding eros. We have moved from praising Eros as a god, through a demonstration that Eros is not a god, but rather a "great daimon," to an identification of eros with that attribute definitive of the "daimonic man" or the philosopher. If Alcibiades were now to come forward and praise Socrates philosophy as the truth of eros, he would provide at once the capstone and the cornerstone of the speeches on eros. He does not do this. The truth of Socrates that he believes he has found is the truth of Socrates not as the lover, but the beloved in the proper sense (222b, 216e–217a). Socrates alone has, Alcibiades believes, those traits that are properly assigned to the beloved: he alone is "truly . . . perfect and most blessed" (204c). As a consequence of this belief, therefore, Alcibiades is unwilling to praise anyone else, whether god or man, and certainly not Eros, as long as Socrates is present (214d). The curiosity of Alcibiades' speech, therefore, is that it is a praise of the truth of eros in a completely anerotic mode. It is the city praising

Socrates. Socrates and his good, therefore, must appear as either the just or the beautiful. As we have noted, Alcibiades insists that Socrates embodies the truth of the beautiful.

Alcibiades claims, moreover, that Socrates will not permit him to praise anyone other than himself (214d). Alcibiades insists that the beauty that Socrates embodies—which he will ultimately identify with the virtue of moderation (216d–e)—demands and requires praise. Socrates emphatically denies that he has any interest in such praise (214d) and so implicitly denies in advance that he embodies the beautiful or the virtue of moderation in the sense in which Alcibiades understands it. Nevertheless, Socrates ends up commanding Alcibiades to speak when he claims he will, through his praise, tell the truth about him (214e). Alcibiades enjoins Socrates to correct him if he says anything that is untrue (214e–215a). Since Socrates does not check him, Alcibiades must manage to convey the truth of Socrates despite himself and in the only way that that truth could be conveyed in such a speech. He must preserve the hiddenness and privacy of Socrates and his thinking even while intending to strip him of what he believes to be his covering-seeming (216d–e).

Alcibiades initially identifies the truth of Socrates with his strangeness or his "being-out-of-place" (*atopian*) (215a). He has at least this much right about Socrates: even in Athens he is never at home. If the Athenian stranger of the *Laws* is, as Aristotle insists, a counterfactual Socrates,[18] Plato's title for him conveys a similar point: not only is he a stranger in Crete, but in Athens as well. He is a stranger simply.

Alcibiades declares that, given his drunken condition, he can articulate Socrates' strangeness only through images (215a). Though he grasps that Socrates is so idiosyncratic as to be utterly incomparable, he is unable to identify his unprecedented character or his strangeness with his eros and knowledge of ignorance. He believes these to be a cover for what really distinguishes him: his moral virtue (216d). His condition, therefore, is such as to put him at a permanent distance from the reality of Socrates' thinking. He declares that Socrates is, on the one hand, most like the statues of Silenus made by the Herm sculptors that when split in two have images of gods within and, on the other hand, like the mythical satyr Marsyas (215b–c). He is like a statue whose exterior is an image of a man-beast, but whose interior is an image of a god, and he is like a hubristic challenger to the supremacy of the gods who, despite his ugliness, was infinitely charming due to the beauty of his music-making. For Alcibiades, Socrates paradoxically combines the bestial and the divine. He does not appear to him to be the paradigmatic representative of the human as such.[19]

Alcibiades employs these two images to capture two aspects of Socrates as he has experienced them: Socrates' speeches and Socrates' deeds. Marsyas represents Socrates as speaker (215c–d) and the statue of Silenus Socrates as

acting (216d–217e). Alcibiades does not believe that the real deeds of Socrates are to be found within his speeches, but separates these two. Having done so, he assigns the greatest significance to Socrates' deeds as he understands them.[20] It is Socrates' "overweening deed" that has revealed to him the truth about Socrates that no one else has seen (216c, 217e). Thus, Alcibiades begins and ends his account with the topic of Socrates' speeches and makes central his account of Socrates' deeds. His entire speech appears to have a structure mimicking the form of the Silenus statues. That he identifies Socrates' speeches with his exterior, however, shows once again precisely how far he stands from the reality of Socrates whose speaking is inseparable from what is most distinctive about him. The images that Alcibiades employs in his drunken praise of Socrates, therefore, present Socrates' exterior as his interior (and vice versa) and his deeds as separable from his speeches and of far greater importance. To be "drunk" in the sense in which Alcibiades appears to embody drunkenness is to invert the apparent and the real and to take actions to be of greater significance than thoughts and speeches.

We are surprised to find, therefore, that according to Alcibiades' initial description of Socrates' speeches, they possess, after the manner of the flute songs of Marsyas, a virtually limitless power to enchant. Anyone who hears them, whether "man, women or boy," is "thunderstruck and possessed" (215d). If we recall the Athenian strangers' teaching regarding the preferences of the various sexes and ages for the several forms of theatrical display, according to which boys prefer comedy, educated women and all men but the oldest or most prudent, tragedy,[21] the implication of Alcibiades' remark is clear. The charm of Socrates' rhetoric far outstrips the psychogogic powers of comedy and tragedy and does so absent any of the trappings of the stage. Indeed, it need not even be Socrates who speaks his words for their power to be exercised; even a "very poor" speaker recounting Socrates' words will produce the same effect (215d).[22] And the effect, at least in Alcibiades' case, is identical to the effect of tragedy, "the most soul-alluring" genre of poetry:[23] "whenever I listen my heart leaps far more than the Corybants and tears pour out of my eyes" (215e).

If Socrates' speeches did indeed possess such a universal power to lead the soul of all his auditors, Socrates could have displaced the poets in their civic status within Athens and would never have been brought to trial. Alcibiades' description of that power seems to echo the fantastical boasts of Aristophanes' Socrates and the fatuous hopes of his Strepsiades to possess "an unconquerable speech."[24] Alcibiades has already declared Socrates' speeches to be victorious on all occasions.[25]

If, according to the general thrust of Alcibiades' account, Socrates' speeches are of secondary importance in relation to his deeds, why does he appear initially to argue that they are omnipotent? Alcibiades understands Socrates' speeches to possess an irresistible power to reveal to their auditor

the character of his own existence, namely, that "it is not worth living the way I am" (215e–216a). For Alcibiades, Socrates' speeches are a spur to alter one's life for the better and from top to bottom. They are the most powerful moral exhortations ever devised. As such, however, they are instrumental to the moral transformation they encourage. They are subordinate to moral action.

Socrates' speeches led Alcibiades to the conclusion that his life was not worth living insofar as they persuaded him that his condition was that of a slave (215e). According to Alcibiades, freedom is the good for a human being in the absence of which life is not worth living. Alcibiades has wholly absorbed this distinctively Athenian, democratic teaching. But he has given it his own idiosyncratic, aristocratic interpretation: to be a slave is to be "in need of much" (216a). To be free, therefore, is to be without need or to be wholly self-sufficient. It was in the false opinion of his own freedom from need that, at the tender age of nineteen,[26] Alcibiades decided it was time for him to "handle the affairs of the Athenians," that is, to rule over them (216a). The euphemistic way in which Alcibiades now speaks of such rule, however, seems to reflect what he believes he has learned from Socrates' exhortative speeches: in ruling, the one without need handles or manages the affairs of others—he takes care of and satisfies *their* needs. For the man who is not a slave, ruling must be to the advantage not of the ruler (for such angling after one's own advantage is evidence of neediness), but that of the ruled.[27] Rule must be directed toward the "common good." It must be just according to the city's understanding of justice.[28]

According to Alcibiades, however, Socrates showed him that he remained needy and so slavish. Socrates convinced him that, despite his possession of beauty, wealth, family connections, and friends, he lacked the sine qua non for self-sufficiency and for rule: wisdom.[29] Having, through Socrates' speeches, been forced to acknowledge his own defectiveness, Alcibiades experienced shame for the first time (216b). He feels shame only before Socrates, however, because he believes that only Socrates possesses the wisdom he lacks. At this point he must have understood Socrates to refrain from ruling despite his being qualified to do so precisely because he lacked what Alcibiades possessed: beauty, wealth, family connections, and friends (218c). Though in possession of wisdom, Socrates was not simply free of need and, therefore, Alcibiades believed, he was vulnerable. Most of all, he believed Socrates was needy and desirous before the beautiful: he was erotically inclined toward Alcibiades himself (217a).

With this in mind, Alcibiades conceived of a Pausanian swap that he believed would be as irresistible to Socrates as it would be profitable to himself: he would offer Socrates the enjoyment of his youthful beauty (along with putting his friends and wealth at his disposal) in exchange for "hearing everything that [Socrates] knew" (217a). Socrates, his speeches, and his

wisdom were to be made instrumental to Alcibiades' project of becoming "the best possible" (218d), that is, of combining perfectly the beautiful and the good (222a) as Alcibiades understands these, namely, as self-sufficiency and political justice. The exchange as Alcibiades conceived it, however, was to be far from equal. Once Alcibiades gained Socrates' wisdom he would be able to dispense with Socrates in his newfound self-sufficiency. Socrates, on the contrary, would remain a slave to Alcibiades' charms.

This project foundered in the face of Socrates' resistance to any attempt to render him and his wisdom instrumental to a purpose beyond themselves. Alcibiades failed to acquire what he believed to be Socrates' hidden wisdom and this failure convinced Alcibiades that he had both radically underestimated Socrates and grossly exaggerated the worth of his own attractions. It was also this failure, he believes, that allowed him to glimpse the truth of Socrates that no one else has seen: "how full he is of moderation (*sophrosyne*)" (216d). In Alcibiades' eyes, Socrates moderation is rooted in the noble contempt a god might feel for everything that is human: Socrates "is not at all concerned if someone is beautiful, anymore than if someone is rich or has any other honor deemed blessed by the many. But he believes that all these possessions are worth nothing and that we are nothing" (217a). Socrates' moderation is not a species of self-restraint: he is simply unmoved. Alcibiades' "insight" into Socrates' moderation, therefore, is identical to his coming to the conviction that Socrates' "being thunderstruck before the beauties" is as superficial a covering-seeming as his "knowing nothing and being ignorant of everything" (216d). Alcibiades finally put together Socrates' eroticism and his knowledge of ignorance, but discarded both as superficial. He understands Socrates to be anerotic and wise.

As long as Alcibiades believed, then, that Socrates' wisdom could be made instrumental to his own aims, Alcibiades understood Socrates to be a lover. As soon as he came to see his wisdom as noninstrumental, he came to understand Socrates as the non-lover or the beloved in the proper sense with whom he himself was hopelessly infatuated. He then took Socrates to be the truth of the beautiful he wished to embody. Thus, it is Socrates' resistance to Alcibiades' charms that is the "overweening deed" that reveals the truth of his nature, according to Alcibiades. Alcibiades elicited this deed and experienced, as he believes, the truth of Socrates' nature in a series of six ascending stages, each putting him in ever greater physical proximity to Socrates' person. That Alcibiades confuses bodily proximity with insight into nature underscores the delusional quality of his experience (175d–e). The six stages in Alcibiades' progress toward what he takes to be the revelation of Socrates' nature are as follows: (1) conversation alone in daylight; (2) naked wrestling; (3) dinner and departure; (4) dinner without departure; (5) conversation alone in darkness; (6) sleeping together (217b–219d). It was during the course of this series of encounters that Alcibiades went from

understanding himself to be the beloved being pursued to understanding himself to being the lover in pursuit. He frames that pursuit in the terms that Socrates' Diotima used to describe the character of Penia's "seduction" of Poros (217d).

Plato seems to revel in the fact that the most beautiful youth in Athens, who strove to embody the beauty of the Homeric gods, came, in his encounter with the ugly, erotic, and perplexed philosopher, to see himself in terms of the scheming and impoverished personification of perplexity and Socrates in terms of the distilled truth of the beautiful gods. Unlike Penia, however, who used Poros to give birth to another version of her needy self, Alcibiades wishes to employ Socrates to leave his former self altogether behind: he will be changed and made new. Having discovered his defectiveness, and so his humanity, through Socrates, he wishes, again through Socrates, to discard them both. As in the case of Agathon, the shame he feels in recognition of his fallibility propels him in the direction of divinity.

On the one hand, unlike Penia's night with Poros, it appears that Alcibiades' night with Socrates leaves him barren: his "being together with" Socrates only redoubles his sense of shame and his opinion regarding his own nothingness (219e); on the other hand, this cannot be strictly true given that his present speech in praise of Socrates is the offspring of that evening's encounter. But whereas the truth of Penia's and Poros' offspring Eros is to be found in the prior unity of both "parents"—which are, properly speaking, only parts of this genuinely antecedent whole—here in Alcibiades' speech the concatenation is "real," that is, Alcibiades' portrait of Socrates is, as he himself explains, an image that is the result of a monstrous combination of independent and prior elements.

Since Alcibiades has come to understand Socrates to be the truth of what formerly he believed himself to embody, Alcibiades' "Socrates" can only be an idealized Alcibiades. That Alcibiades' "Socrates" is not simply this is demonstrated by a fact that we have already noted: Socrates refrains from exercising the veto power that Alcibiades himself gave him in regard to the truth of his praise—he never accuses Alcibiades of lying. Socrates himself, therefore, is hidden within Alcibiades' idealization. To arrive at the truth of Alcibiades' portrait of Socrates, therefore, requires that one separate out these elements and isolate the truth of Socrates' ingredient in Alcibiades' "Socrates."

The fact that Alcibiades offers his speech in a state of advanced intoxication, and that he insists that Socrates remains perfectly sober no matter what quantity of wine he consumes, might lead one to believe that Alcibaides' speech is a concatenation of the sober and the drunken with Socrates representing the former and Alcibiades the latter. This belief seems to be confirmed when Alcibiades identifies the first two principles of his speech insofar as it shamelessly undertakes to reveal the naked truth of

Socrates: wine and justice (217e). The first principle is operative in Alcibiades—if it weren't for his intoxication, this truth would never have been told—and the second is at least inspired by Socrates—to stop here would be to do Socrates an injustice and he seems to demand that justice be done to him just as he appears to Alcibiades to require praise for what he takes to be his moral virtue. To arrive at the reality of Socrates, then, one would simply have to abstract Alcibiades' drunkenness from the mix and thereby perceive the true account.

Now if drunkenness means the intoxications of hope and fear, then Socrates in his philosophizing does indeed appear to be sober. If, however, intoxication means the liberation from the shame instilled in the soul along with the lawful calculation of the city, Alcibiades has never been drunk—Socrates at the end of his speech declares him to be sober—and Socrates alone can claim to be a "drinker." It is not surprising, then, that Alcibiades himself insists that wine is a principle of truthfulness and associates wine and drunkenness with philosophy. He is like the victim of the viper's bite, he says, who will speak of his affliction only among those who have been similarly afflicted and he knows that the present company have all been "bitten and struck by philosophical speeches": they have all shared in the "philosophic madness and bacchic frenzy" (218a–b). "Wine" then must refer primarily to philosophy and the truth of Socrates and justice to Alcibiades and his contribution to the mix.

In fact, Alcibiades himself identifies the animating motive of his speech with a concern for justice: he must give Socrates the praise that is his due and he must put Socrates on trial and make him pay the penalty for the outrage (*hybris*) he committed against his person (219c). The fellow celebrants at the banquet are to be the judges who both praise and condemn Socrates for a single action: the (extraordinary) outrage that Socrates committed against Alcibiades was to refrain from committing an (ordinary) outrage against him (219d). Socrates' hubris is identical to his moderation. But Alcibiades' accusation runs deeper: Socrates' refusal to do justice to Alcibiades, in refusing to take up his offer of an exchange, implies a refusal to allow his wisdom to be put in the service of the "common good." In his perfect moderation or self-sufficiency, Socrates proved to be non-altruistic or lacking in public spirit, and, therefore, unjust. He would not rule over Alcibiades to Alcibiades' advantage so that Alcibiades himself might rule over the Athenians to their advantage. Alcibiades was ready to do "just about whatever Socrates commanded" (217a, 216b), but Socrates would issue no orders.[30]

Socrates' lack of concern with justice seems to be confirmed in his exchange with Alcibiades during the night he spends at the latter's house. When Alcibiades makes his offer, Socrates insists that he is not "worthless" (*phaulos*), precisely insofar as he proposes an unjust exchange: "bronze" (the seeming and opinion of beautiful things—his beauty of shape) for "gold" (the

truth of beautiful things—Socrates' own "impossible beauty" or his wisdom) (218e–219a). To be scrupulous in regard to the just is to be a nonentity; to selfishly seek as much as the situation will yield qualifies one as someone to reckon with. A zealous regard for one's own good is of greater weight than mere adherence to a sense of what is fair.[31]

Having compared Alcibiades to Homer's Diomedes—and implicitly rejected any comparison between himself and Glaucon—Socrates issues a warning to Alcibiades: unlike Diomedes, for whom Athena cleared away the mist from his eyes so that he could rightly distinguish mortal from immortal and determine the respective powers and worth of each, Alcibiades' "eyes of thought" may be less than keen and what he takes to be Socrates' core—his wisdom—may be "nothing" (219a). Socrates comes very close to revealing to Alcibiades the lesson he learned from Diotima concerning the specious character of wisdom (it is an "impossible beauty") and so the specious character of the beauty or perfection of the gods. His comparison of Alcibiades to Diomedes is ultimately negative as well: Alcibiades cannot at present detect the insubstantial character of divine perfection. He never will.

Though Alcibiades at first believed that he had "wounded" Socrates and that Socrates would now have his way and share his wisdom with him (219b), when, on the contrary, Socrates sleeps chastely by his side through the night, Alcibiades formulates two thoughts that together lead to a single conclusion in his mind. First, Socrates is not erotically needy when it comes to the beautiful (216d) and, second, he will not allow his own "impossible beauty" to be compromised by being employed as a means (219e). Socrates, therefore, is the self-sufficiently beautiful. He is the truth of the perfection of the gods (221d, 216e–217a). But since Socrates' apparent insistence on his noninstrumentality leads to his refusal to behave justly toward Alcibiades himself, Alcibiades comes to see the beautiful and the just as necessarily separate. The truth of divine perfection is beauty, not justice. He identifies the former with moderation or being without need and, therefore, with freedom as he conceives of it. This forces him to the conclusion that justice must involve a form of slavery. To rule perfectly to the advantage of another is to submit oneself perfectly to the purpose of another. It is to be the perfect instrument. But this is to be the perfect slave. Alcibiades has articulated, albeit in a distorted fashion, the distinction between the beautiful as the appearance of the power of the good to separate apart and the just as the spurious version of the power of the good to bind together.

In the wake of what he understands to be his encounter with Socrates' nature, therefore, he comes to perceive the impossible character of his former hopes—it is not possible to combine in one the beauty and the justice of the gods. He, therefore, now despairs of attaining his aim of making incarnate the Olympian gods and comes to believe that the truth of those gods lies exclusively in the beautiful. Since he assigns the latter to Socrates, he

himself is compelled to settle for the just. He is willing to do so primarily on account of the honor that he receives from the many in "handling their affairs" (216b): they perceive him as doing so from a position of self-sufficiency—if he were in need, he would mind his own business. They honor him for his apparent beauty. Alcibiades, however, now knows of his own ugliness and though he is temporarily intoxicated by the admiration of the multitude, whenever he sees Socrates, he is reminded of his true condition and his pride gives way to shame: the public eye is the fig leaf Alcibiades employs to cover over his private vice. His "virtue" is vice concealed and he is what he most despises. He hates Socrates for leaving him in this condition—and sometimes wishes him dead (216b–c)—but he cannot help loving him insofar as he believes he embodies that which he most longs to be and that which alone would make like worth living, but which he now concludes he must live without.

Alcibiades' despair is bottomless. When he speaks of his flight from Socrates in terms of that of a runaway slave and in the figure of Odysseus' men in their escape from the destructive enchantments of the Sirens, he insists that had he not fled he would have been reduced to growing old while sitting in idleness at Socrates' feet (216a–b). Socrates' self-sufficiency implies his freedom from a slavish subordination to a purpose outside himself, but his beauty or perfection implies the absence of any purpose of his own—his beauty is idle. Alcibiades is close to concluding that if the just without the beautiful is slavish, the beautiful without the just is useless. By themselves, both are bad and they cannot be made to fit together. Alcibiades has not only concluded that he is necessarily what he despises most, but at the edge of his consciousness he catches sight of the utter purposelessness of existence—a world completely devoid of meaning in which the good is wholly unavailable. He has drunk deep from the cup of fear and is on the brink of succumbing to "total terror."

This terror is the result, not of a program of moral instruction undertaken by Socrates on his behalf, but of Alcibiades, in accordance with his own nature, having translated what for Socrates is a cognitive experience—perplexity or an insight into the necessary incompatibility of the beautiful and the just (219e)—into a noncognitive experience, one grounded in the passions. Socrates' shameless acknowledgment of his own defectiveness—his knowledge of ignorance—had been taken over by Alcibiades as shame (216b)—an attempt to cover over the defectiveness that Socrates has forced him to acknowledge. The nature that forces Alcibiades into this translation or debasement is also at work in his inability to understand the good in nonpolitical terms or in his ultimate insistence on the just. It is, furthermore, the foundation of his experiencing what he calls philosophy and philosophical perplexity as pure pain (217e–218b) rather than a "strange mixture of pleasure and pain."[32]

Alcibiades himself points to this difference between Socrates' nature and his own when he speaks of Socrates' "courage and moderation" as one and the same (219d). He somehow perceives that in Socrates' nature two virtues are identical that in every other case, including his own, must be separate and even at odds. This unity is possible insofar as Socrates' virtue is free of the negative basis of all moral virtue. His virtue is not a refraining from action on the basis of shame and fear, but the shameless activity of philosophizing. It is the undaunted inquiry into the beings in the face of his own perplexity that is at the one and the same time an inquiry into his own nature on the ground of his knowledge of ignorance.[33]

Alcibiades, however, in praising Socrates' deeds wholly abstracts from his philosophizing in order to thematize Socrates' endurance: Socrates is immovable, according to Alcibiades, when it comes to the blandishments and compulsions of pleasure and pain (219e–221c). He is a "statue of virtue" (216e, 222a) and his most manifestly impressive "deed" is to stand still for a full twenty-four hours (220c–d). Alcibiades has no access to what constituted Socrates' activity and motion while his body remained still—Socrates' thought is wholly unavailable to him. Alcibiades' speaks of Socrates' wisdom and mind (217a, 222a), but he concedes that he was unable to gain access to either: his claim to have penetrated to the core of Socrates' nature, therefore, cannot be sustained.[34] If Socrates is a god, he remains for Alcibiades a hidden god.

Alcibiades' encounter with Socrates has led him to the conclusion that the attempt to force the gods out of concealment is of necessity a failure. Not only is it the case that the just and the beautiful are joined only in the lying speeches of the poet, but the one true god, namely, Socrates, insists on veiling his perfection. Why this must be so is not clear to Alcibiades. That it is so he affirms both in his contention that Socrates wraps his beauty in the ugly hide of a satyr (216d, 221e) and in his retraction regarding the rhetorical effects of Socrates' speeches: at the end of his speech he admits that the many are moved only to laughter by them if they are moved at all (221d–222a). Though they are the only speeches with mind and divine virtue within, they appear on their exterior unornamented, repetitive, and exclusively concerned with the least noble of things (221e).

Though the divine Socrates is, according to Alcibiades, invulnerable to the importunities of pleasure and pain, precisely because his divinity is hidden, he is not invulnerable simply. Alcibiades presents Socrates as clear-headed, enduring, and courageous in retreat, but he presents him as most characteristically in retreat, and in doing so credits Aristophanes as the source of his own portrayal (221a–b). He points then to the same weakness to which Aristophanes pointed in the *Clouds*: Socrates is compelled to retreat before the overwhelming force of the majority or the many. Precisely because he is a hidden god, Socrates' divinity is exposed and compromised.

He is in need of an ally of a strength far beyond that of Alcibiades on horseback. He needs Plato.

It would seem that the power of the multitude is mustering against Socrates because they have divined what Alcibiades claims to have seen with his own eyes: Socrates' moderation is identical to his hubris. When Socrates went unshod even in the depth of winter, the "soldiers looked askance at him as if he were despising them" (220b–c). Socrates unconventionality leads them to believe that he despises them for their adherence to convention. This becomes a serious matter when Socrates prays, after his day and night of thinking, not to any of the Olympians, but to the Sun (220d). Socrates' unconventionality extends to his attitude to the gods. Whatever the character of Socrates' piety, the multitude senses that it is certainly not cut from the same cloth as their own: Socrates, they believe, has no use for Olympian gods, whatever his attitude to those "gods" that are visible to all men at all times. Though they are mistaken in this regard—only through Socrates are the Homeric gods put to use in the fashion for which they were ultimately designed—their mistake contains a core of truth: his use of them effectively dissolves them. Socrates' seeming immunity to ordinary pain and pleasure points to the same conclusion: the truth of Socrates' resistance to pain and pleasure is his freedom from fear and hope, particularly of the theological species. But this very resistance and freedom, then, parallels or is the source of his inability to move the multitude in speech: immune to hope and fear, he is unable to appeal to the hopes and fears of the many. An Aristophanic poetic art is out of Socrates' reach because it lies beneath his concerns.

Alcibiades and the multitude are of one mind regarding the identity of Socrates' moderation and his hubris. Are they correct in this identification? Alcibiades in appealing to Homer at the opening of his description of Socrates' deeds of endurance—it is worth hearing "what sort of thing the strong man did and dared" (220c)—seems to undercut his own assertion of this identity. The lines first appear in the *Odyssey* in the mouth of Helen[35] who recounts how she alone was able to perceive Odysseus the man himself beneath his disguise: he had outfitted himself in filthy rags and marred his face with blows in order to take on the appearance of a beggar. Others—his own wife and son among them—fail to penetrate a similar disguise and, as a stranger, whether in the guise of a beggar or not, he is often taken to be a god. According to Alcibiades, Socrates is to Odysseus as he himself is to Helen: he alone can see beneath Socrates' surface. Yet the comparison with Odysseus—a comparison Socrates himself deems apt (198c)—subverts Alcibiades' claim to have found a god beneath Socrates' satyr-like exterior: though Helen and her husband Menelaus achieve and embrace the immortality that Hector and Achilles sought, Odysseus is the one man whose choice is to be a human being rather than a god.[36] The representative of mind in Homer knows that mind and an inhuman perfection are incompatible.[37]

Socrates is Odysseus' twin in this regard not only because he chooses his own death and on his last day identifies philosophy with the practice of dying and being dead, but because he affirms his own human wisdom and repudiates all divine wisdom.[38]

Neither Odysseus nor Socrates has any inclination to displace the gods and stand in their stead. They are not "heaven-stormers." Divinity is not finally attractive to them. From the perspective of the great majority of men, therefore, they would appear to be simply mad. Alcibiades is right to insist that Socrates' moderation is one with its contrary, but he has chosen the wrong contrary: not hubris, but madness is at the core of Socrates' sound-mindedness (*sophrosyne*).

Why then does Socrates fail to object—as he did when Alcibiades insisted that Socrates would allow him to praise neither man nor god in his stead—when Alcibiades insists on his divinity? Ought he not to have enjoined him to remain silent or "speak words of good omen" (214d)? According to Socrates, the reality of the beautiful gods is to be found in his own god Poros—the personification of the overcoming of perplexity. Socrates, however, is the incarnation of perplexity. Yet Poros points in two directions: as depersonified toward the ideas; as personified to wisdom embodied. If, however, the truth of the ideas is the fundamental problems or perplexities, then the truth of wisdom is to be found in knowledge of ignorance. Socrates and his human wisdom is the reality of wisdom. Socrates is the truth of the beautiful gods. He is the "most perfect being that is a person."[39]

Alcibiades' speech then, despite presenting itself as a diversion from the theme proposed for the evening's feast of speeches, follows the previous six speeches in train and provides their capstone. His praise of Socrates contains the answer to the question implicit in each and every one of them: "What is god?"

Socrates is alien to both the human and the divine insofar as these present themselves as distinct classes. He cannot be made to fit into either. He is the stranger in the proper sense.[40] Socrates summed up this indeterminacy at the core of his being in the adjective "daemonic." Alcibiades takes over this notion and makes it the heart of his portrait of Socrates. At the literal center of his speech he declares Socrates to be "this truly daemonic and amazing being" and emphatically reminds us of the truthfulness of his speech: "not even in this, Socrates, will you say that I lie" (219c). Alcibiades has presented us with all the elements we need to come to an understanding of Socrates, even if he has presented them in a completely spurious order. But he himself warns us that this is the case (215a). Despite Alcibiades' own intention, Alcibiades' speech does present the truth of Socrates—he does not lie.

Through his experience of Socrates' unclassifiable nature, Alcibiades has returned to the class of the human as conventionally defined: he has been

made to experience shame.[41] Oddly enough, however, the very association that relieved him of his hubris and instilled in him a worship of the virtue of moderation made it impossible for the Athenians to view him as anything other than hubristic, immoderate, and impious. The suspicions the multitude entertained in regard to Socrates necessarily infected their opinion in regard to the young man with whom Socrates associated so intimately.

The Athenians experienced in relation to Alcibiades, therefore, something analogous to what Alcibiades experienced in his relation to Socrates. If they perceived Alcibiades as a god incarnate and revealed, they also came to realize that their own pederastic love for him was incompatible with traditional piety and the democratic polity this piety supports: to confess his divinity would be to confess themselves, as lovers of his divinity, to be his slaves. Recognizing the falsehood of their own founding myth, which links eros to the origin of their democratic regime, however, meant recognizing that their greatest hopes—the imperial longings they see embodied in Alcibiades as divine beloved—are identical to their greatest fears—relinquishing their ostensible freedom and acknowledging their slavery in their submission to the rule of a tyrant. Lacking Alcibiades' nobility, their experience of total terror led to a panic that discharged itself in anger and cruelty in the name of piety. The Athenians themselves took on the aspect of the punitive gods in seeking to annihilate the beautiful god they both loved and hated.[42] This same pious anger eventually confronted Socrates with the threat to the existence of philosophy in Athens that he could meet and defuse only though his trial and death and only, ultimately, with the help of Plato and his art of writing. Alcibiades crowning Socrates with the leaves of victory in his contest with the poets is plausible only in the wake of Plato's having made Socrates "beautiful and new."

CONCLUSION

SOCRATES AND PLATO

According to Socrates, Alcibiades has offered his speech not in order to praise him, but with the hidden purpose of keeping Socrates and Agathon apart (222c–d). Alcibiades attempts to stand in the way of Socrates' pairing with a beautiful youth who is also a tragic poet. The greatest of political men wishes to prevent Socrates from putting to use his erotics and from enlisting the poet to his cause. In this respect, Alcibiades appears once again as the city of Athens in its suspicion and envy of Socrates. Socrates calls Alcibiades' speech, insofar as it is devoted to this end, a satyr-play (222d). For Alcibiades himself, the speech seems to have recounted what he took to be the tragedy of his encounter with Socrates. Alcibiades' speech elicits laughter among the guests of the banquet (222c) and they, therefore, seem to second Socrates' description and not Alcibiades' experience. The encounter between philosophy and the city is, for the city, a tragedy. Athens is no good without Socrates, but ultimately cannot endure his presence within its walls. Plato's *Apology of Socrates* is for the political man, therefore, a source of pity and fear; for the philosophic it is more apt to be a cause of laughter than sorrow and is finally a vehicle to insight into the nature of things that lies beyond laughter and tears.[1]

Still, by his own admission, Socrates is eager to form an alliance not with the comic, but the tragic poet (213d, 222e). Though Aristophanes may be immeasurably closer to Socrates than Agathon when it comes to insight into the nature of things, there is something in the nature of comedy as a genre that seems to make the comic poet worse than useless for Socrates as an ally: the comic poet ridicules the gods and deflates the noble. If he did not provide his spectators with an overwhelming pleasure and conceal himself beneath the appearance of madness, Aristophanes would have found himself on trial for impiety and corrupting the youth long before Socrates. Aristotle declares that comedy's very name is said to be derivative of the

fact that, when it first appeared, it was considered unfit for admittance within the walls of the city.[2]

According to Socrates, however, poetry as such really belongs outside the city. It is an ancilla not to political life, but to philosophy, and it is most of all the tragic poet "by art" who can realize the true purpose of poetry (223d). Alcibiades himself seems to have admitted that nothing can stand in the way of the realization of this purpose: before engaging in what would have proved to be the second of the evening's contests in speeches—Alcibiades attempting through his praises of Socrates to separate Agathon and Socrates, and Socrates through his projected praise of Agathon to bind Agathon to himself (222c–223a)—Alcibiades declared Socrates' speeches to be victorious on all occasions (213e). Moreover, Alcibiades' speech, despite what Socrates declares to be its object, could not be better suited to render Socrates as attractive as possible to Agathon. On the one hand, whereas at the close of his speech, Socrates portrayed philosophy as the ascent to and identification with the self-sufficiently beautiful, Alcibiades has portrayed Socrates as having already completed that ascent and identification. Socrates is the repersonified beautiful itself. On the other hand, having assigned himself the just and Socrates the beautiful, Alcibiades could not help portraying Socrates' beauty from the limiting perspective of his own position, that is, precisely in terms of the just: Socrates' beauty was for him not primarily a source of erotic attraction, but of shame. Alcibiades, in translating Socratic perplexity into shame, legalizes the beautiful and makes it a source of something like punitive justice. Socrates deprives Alcibiades of all hope and afflicts him with the greatest of pains, both, according to Alcibiades' own understanding, in the interest of humiliating him in order to relieve him of his hubris. Alcibiades, even while attempting to discriminate between the beautiful and the just, cannot help collapsing them once again in his portrait of Socrates. But since Socrates is for him the one true god, Alcibiades cannot help painting his new god in the colors of the old gods of the tragic poets—Socrates is both beautiful and terrifying.[3] Alcibiades' portrait of Socrates, then, must be infinitely charming to Agathon: what Agathon offered as a playful image in speech—the anerotic god Eros whose beauty and justice are one and the same—has, according to Alcibiades, become a reality in the person of Socrates. Thanks to Alcibiades, Socrates must now appear to Agathon as a dream come true. Nothing can keep the philosopher and the tragic poet apart.[4]

Nothing but the limitations of the tragic poet as tragic poet. These limitations would no doubt have been made abundantly clear in the speech in praise of Agathon that Socrates proposes to deliver. The entrance of a band of revelers thwarts Socrates' purpose (223b).[5] Socrates, however, returns to this theme at the very close of the evening after some order has been restored to the banquet. When all the others have gone home to bed,

Socrates is up drinking with Aristophanes and Agathon, "compelling them to agree that the same man should know how to make comedy and tragedy; and that he who is by art a tragic poet is also a comic poet" (223d). Only the poet who was able to transcend the distinct genres of comedy and tragedy—something of which neither Aristophanes nor Agathon proved capable—could be of service to philosophy. Only a man of Homer's capacity could form a natural alliance with Socrates.

Frustrated as we are that Aristodemus' lack of wakefulness robs us of an account of the peak of the speeches of the banquet, Plato has not been stingy in this regard. This lacuna merely points us in the direction of the *Phaedrus*, a dialogue in which both the praise of a young poet—not Agathon, of course, but Plato—and the articulation of the contours of the true poetic art are to be found. Through enumerating the obstacles that appear to stand in the way of any writing reproducing the substance of Socrates' knowledge of ignorance and his erotics, Socrates displays both the requirements of that art and the full extent of Plato's achievement. The *Phaedrus*, therefore, reveals the limitations of the *Symposium* in showing that the truth of Socrates' relation to the poets cannot be found in an examination of his relation to the tragic and comic poets of Athens, but only in the relation of Socrates' erotics to Plato's art of writing. Though the tragic and comic poets provided an indispensable precondition for Socratic philosophy in their imitation of the city and the political man and their necessary limitations, they failed to bring the poetic art to its completion in the imitation of philosophy as transcending those limitations.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Thucydides II.41.

2. Thucydides VI.24; cf. Seth Benardete, "On Plato's *Symposium*," in *The Argument of the Action: Essays on Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 169.

3. Cf. Gary Alan Scott, *Plato's Socrates as Educator* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 133.

4. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 12–13.

5. Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 230.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Perhaps this is not quite accurate: precisely in showing Apollodorus the radical defectiveness of the human he has instilled in him an impossible longing for something that he does not and cannot understand, but which he dimly perceives to lie beyond what he takes to be the limits of human nature.

2. How the savage Apollodorus is nevertheless appropriately equipped with the nickname "softy" (173d) is made clear precisely in the coincidence of his contempt and his pity.

3. Compare, however, *Theaetetus* 151c–d.

4. *Second Letter* 314c.

5. Hesiod, *Theogony* 120.

6. Cf. Xenophon, Symposium 2.21.

7. Aristodemus insists that Socrates defend himself against the charge that in inviting him to the banquet he is inviting a "worthless" (*phaulos*) man to the dinner of a wise man (174c).

8. For the dramatic date of the dialogue see Plato, *Symposium*, C. J. Rowe, ed. and trans. (Warrister, England: Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1998), 129.

9. Plato seems to indicate, therefore, that it was through his effect upon Alcibiades that Socrates most directly and obviously effected the piety of the Athenians.

10. Leo Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, Seth Benardete, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 24.

11. There is an old story according to which the Athenians punished Homer with a fine (Diogenes Laertius, II.5.xxiii).

12. Of course, the proverb as such ("the good go uninvited to the feasts of the good") is not even referred to by Homer. It is Socrates who draws the inference that Homer is treating it wantonly. Nevertheless, there is something like this proverb to be found in the *Iliad*. It is put in the mouth of Menelaus as he and the Achaeans are fighting the Trojans over the body of Patroklos (XVII.254–55).

13. *Iliad* II.408. He has first alienated Achilles and then invited an all-out mutiny that only the rhetorical power of Odysseus, who temporarily assumes the office of the king, is able to reverse.

14. It is this very fact that has caused his falling out with Achilles: the latter claims to be "the best of the Achaeans" by nature.

15. *Iliad* XVII.90–105.

16. In the *Iliad*, at least, Menelaus shows a form of prudence that, on at least one occasion, even Odysseus, "versed in every advantage" (XXIII.709) lacks.

17. *Apology of Socrates* 18a–d.

18. Athens in her devotion to the beautiful appears as the proper antipode to Jerusalem, whose conflation of the good and the just entails a severe concern for obedience to law that seems to exclude the possibility of philosophy arising as a "native growth" within her midst.

19. *Clouds* 1375–1482.

20. Though Socrates certainly possesses a psychogogic power of his own, it is one that he employs only in private and upon individuals and that does not move the passions in a similar way as that of the poet. Socrates' one attempt at persuading a multitude, which is made under the heaviest sort of compulsion, was, after all, not a complete success.

21. *Laws* 637d, 647e–649b.

22. *Laws* 650b–652b, 671b–d, 672d.

23. *Phaedo* 97b–99b.

24. Steven Berg, "Nature, Rhetoric and Philosophy in Aristophanes' *Clouds*" in *Ancient Philosophy*, 18 (1998), 10; cf. Leo Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 49.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Cf. Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, 48.
2. Thucydides I.70.6–7.
3. Ibid. V.105.
4. Hesiod, *Theogony* 120–23.
5. Thucydides II.41–43.
6. *Phaedrus* 228c, 236e, 242a–b.
7. There is almost universal agreement within the scholarship that Phaedrus has a version of the Alcestis story other than that of Euripides in mind. The evidence for this claim is simply that he seems to recount a conclusion of the drama that is at odds with Euripides' own. Two considerations argue against this conclusion: on the one hand, Phaedrus, in describing Alcestis as, through her devotion, showing up Admetus' parents as alien and kindred in name alone paraphrases lines from Euripides' play (636–47) and, on the other, he has good reason to "rewrite"

the end of Euripides' work, for by these means he lends rhetorical encouragement to the lovers, while pointing all non-lovers in the direction of the play as a true account of the foundations for the otherwise inexplicable behavior of individuals such as Alcestis and the remarkable profit that can be extracted from them by cool-headed men like Admetus.

8. It is precisely the hospitality that Admetus has shown him that persuades Apollo to offer him the opportunity of letting another die in his place, an office that only his wife Alcestis is willing to fulfill. Moreover, it is the hospitality that Admetus shows to Heracles—a demigod and future immortal—that persuades him to retrieve Alcestis from the dead. Heracles calls Admetus the most "hospitable" of men, but the translation does not capture the meaning of the original—*philoxenoi* or "lover of strangers." If Admetus loves anyone, it is only the strangest of strangers—the immortals and their offspring. He obviously shows no genuine love for his wife and children and has nothing but hatred and contempt for his mother and father. Mortals who are his kin are not objects of affection for Admetus. They are either useful or useless in his attempts to avoid the fate that would separate him from his immortal friends and join him with them on the basis of their common mortality.

9. Lines 323–25; 445–54.

10. The specific thoughtlessness of the lover is his taking the gods of the poets and their stories of the afterlife literally.

11. What Thucydides' Pericles seems to wish to do in his Funeral Oration is to replace the Hades of the poet with the *epitaphios* of the city as the condition for the beautiful life and death. In doing so he seems to suggest a coincidence between the city and the realm of shades—cf. Seth Benardete, *Socrates' Second Sailing: On Plato's Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 175.

12. The "real men" are not really manly insofar as the conventional courage they possess is not identical to the true courage of the knower (179a–b): like women, and unlike the knowers, the "real men" are ruled by shame. Cf. Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece* 1825–1834.

13. This is the truth of Phaedrus' claim that the gods reward the selfless lover and punish the selfish beloved: the same multitude who honor those who lay down their lives for their sake, persecute those who refuse to do so.

14. While rhetorically conflating the deeds and motives of lover and non-lover, he in fact rigorously distinguishes them: the beautiful or noble life of the lover that is commonly understood to be the best life—the life of moral virtue or the moral courage based upon shame of the real man—is, according to Phaedrus, merely a false image of the good life of the non-lover—the life of genuine virtue or the intellectual courage of the softy who is fearless insofar as he is without shame and who is best, not by convention, but by nature (179b).

15. Cf. Stanley Rosen, *Plato's* Symposium (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 56: "Phaedrus does not admire poetry as art but rather as a kind of rhetoric."

16. Cf. Aristophanes, *Birds* 465–569.

17. Cf. *Laws* 649d; also Aristophanes, *Plutos* 563–64.

18. Cf. Rosen, *Plato's* Symposium, 51: "Phaedrus is sanctioning the subordination of political institutions to the gratification of individual desire."

19. Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, 53.

20. Cf. *Phaedrus* 236b.

21. Cf. Thucydides' Cleon who accuses the Athenians of sitting in the assembly simply in order to hear and to judge of speeches and speakers (III.38). So Phaedrus' speech is ultimately offered in the interest of promoting and justifying his own practice as the good life; that practice, however, consists not in the giving, but the receiving of speeches. Phaedrus is primarily an auditor. His passivity in regard to the speeches reflects his belief that not the life of the lover, but that of the beloved or non-lover, is the good life. He has come to the banquet not primarily to speak, but to listen.

22. *Phaedrus* 252d–253c, 255c–e.

23. Ibid. 249d–250d.

24. Phaedrus' assumption that Eros and death are linked only by means of the poet's art, then, is exactly the inversion of the Platonic understanding, according to which Plato's art alone effects the separation of Socrates' dual characterization of philosophy as erotics and dying and being dead. They are split by being made the subject matter of separate works in the Platonic corpus and ultimately intelligible only as together rather than apart.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Pausanias, then, argues for the distinction between two forms of Eros by appealing to two separate account of the birth of Aphrodite found in the writings of the poets. The first is Hesiod's and the second that of Homer. The remarkable fact is that Pausanias seems to believe that if one finds conflicting stories about a single being in the works of the poets, then one is given license to assume not that the poets are speaking, through these stories, of different aspects of a single phenomenon, but rather of completely separate beings. Put simply, Pausanias takes the stories of the poets literally and devises a "theology" on that basis. In this, however, he seems merely to follow the lead of the law that, in adopting the heroes and gods of the poets, transforms them into the objects of cult and civic worship.

2. *Theogony* 154–98.

3. Seth Benardete, *The Tragedy and Comedy of Life: Plato's* Philebus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 102.

4. It is, of course, hard to understand how Aphrodite of all gods could be ugly and remain a goddess. Pausanias' attempt to yoke the beautiful goddess to the law seems incoherent from the start.

5. Cf. *Protagoras* 309a–b.

6. On the four occasions when Pausanias does appeal to the good (181b, 181e, 184d, 185a) he uses it as interchangeable with the beautiful or noble.

7. The assumption of the law that corporeal punishment is an effective means of instilling virtue in the soul is the clearest sign of this.

8. *Minos* 315a.

9. Ibid.

10. *Hipparchus* 229c.

11. Cf. Rosen, *Plato's* Symposium, 77–82.

12. Thucydides, VI.54–57.

13. *Phaedrus* 237b, 238a–c.
14. Cf. Thucydides II.41, 63; III.37.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. The fact that Aristophanes disrupts the order of the banquet puts him in Socrates' camp. The fact that the comic poet does so unintentionally, whereas Socrates at the beginning of the evening had done so with full awareness of what he was doing, divides them apart.

2. Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, 96. One should not lose sight of the fact, however, that Plato imitates the workings of chance precisely through his own artful design.

3. In this he appears to agree with Socrates in the *Republic* who founds his city in speech upon the city of arts that he calls "the true city" (369c–372e).

4. *Phaedo* 99e.

5. Cf. Rosen, *Plato's* Symposium, 101.

6. Though it is initially unclear whether the great and wondrous god that he praises is Eros or the art of medicine, it is certainly the case that the medical art will claim as its chief concern the supervision of eros.

7. Cf. Descartes, *Meditations* VI. 84.

8. Cf. Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, 100.

9. Cf. *Hippias Major* 301b. Eryximachus is portrayed as a student of Hippias in the *Protagoras* (315b–c) and at the center of that dialogue Hippias articulates the fundamental principle of Eryximachus' physics: "by nature like is akin to like" (337d). For an alternative view see Rosen, *Plato's* Symposium, 94. Rosen's assumption that it is Empedoclean physics that lies behind Eryximachus' account compels him to insist that it is art and not nature that "brings about the pederastic principle that like loves like" (103–105).

10. Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1993), 472–73.

11. Cf. *Laws* 889b–c.

12. *Timaeus* 34b–35b; *Phaedo* 97b–d; Diels-Kranz, Fragments 12 and 17. A solution to Eryximachus' cosmological problem, however, would require mind to operate in a way contrary to that of Anaxagorian mind that is responsible not for the being together, but the separation of the elements. A combination of the Eryximachian and Anaxagorian accounts would leave mind responsible for both the being together and the separating apart of all things.

13. Cf. Bacon, *Wisdom of the Ancients*, "Orpheus"; *Advancement of Learning* II.4. ii.

14. He also, of course, rejects the ordinary understanding of health as a natural state that medicine seeks to restore or prolong, in order to attribute to art alone the power to bring into being the apparent good of immortal life.

15. Cf. Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, 101.

16. This attribution, however, must contain a germ of truth insofar as his own attempt to transgress the boundary between the divine and the human and provide the latter with an immortality that is the hallmark of the former—that is, to transform men into gods—is certainly inspired by the influence that the poets

have had upon the desire and imagination of the Greeks and, in particular, the Athenians (Cf. *Theages* 126b).

17. Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* I.7.xi.

18. Diels-Kranz, Fragment 51.

19. Cf. Seth Benardete, "On Plato's *Symposium*," 296. It is precisely this structure as it is revealed in the case of Eros itself that Socrates will articulate in his speech when arguing that Eros as philosophy is in between wisdom and lack of learning and, at the same time, the offspring of Poros and Penia (203b–204c).

20. *Philebus* 25d–26a.

21. *Statesman* 283d.

22. Cf. Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, 102.

23. Cf. Benardete, *The Tragedy and Comedy of Life*, 219–20.

24. According to Eryximachus' view, the life of the immortal gods is not a life of bliss, but of perpetual misery.

25. *Philebus* 47b. What he does, in accordance with the general principles of his account in which soul is reduced to body, is to understand this psychological experience in "literal" or, more precisely, bodily terms. Simply on the bodily level, however, sexual pleasure is, according to the uses of nature, linked not to death, but the engendering of life, and dissolution or illness is the cause not of pleasure but of pain (*Philebus* 31d). On the basis of his misinterpreting an experience of soul as a bodily phenomenon, he has proceeded to turn the world of our experience on its head. In other words, he does what science is always compelled to do.

26. *Statesman* 283e–284b; *Sophist* 227a–c; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1106a25–1106b15. An appeal to human experience, however, constitutes a surreptitious appeal to soul and the experiences of soul. Indeed, as soon as the issue of the production of pleasure gets attached to that of maintaining the proper ratio between the elemental contraries in a compound body, the fact from which Eryximachus' account has abstracted can no longer be ignored: the contraries of, for example, the hot and the cold or the sweet and the bitter are not material constituents of bodies, but the contrary qualities of bodies as sensed and, therefore, of sensation. Strictly speaking, however, sensation is not itself a bodily phenomenon: as Socrates and Theaetetus seem to agree, we sense *through*, not *by* the organs of sense and it is the soul itself to which sensation as such is present (Theaetetus 184c–185e. Cf. Leibniz, *Monadology*, 17). The real issue hiding behind Eryximachus' talk about an artful unity of such contraries, therefore, is that of how they are bound together in the soul, that is, whether or how the aesthetic soul, despite the manifold of sensation, is one. (*Theaetetus* 184c–d; also cf. Aristotle *De Anima* 427a1–5).

27. In regard, for example, to the issue of burial, Heraclitus proclaims that "corpses should be thrown out faster than dung" (Diels-Kranz 96) and Socrates displays his lack of concern for the ritual disposal of his corpse after he is dead (*Phaedo* 115c–d).

28. Cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds* 1427–51; Thucydides V.105.

29. Eryximichus initially appears, in this portion of his speech, to retreat to a somewhat more reasonable Empedoclian position according to which the two Erotes are understood to be equipollent principles of nature, that is, strife between opposites (or love between similars) and love between opposites compete and alternate according to the nature of things. In the midst of his description of the disorderliness

of the seasons, however, he reverts to attributing this disruption to Eros simple and unqualified (188a).

30. *Republic* 407e.

31. The antinomianism of pederasty was implicit in Pausanias' speech and will be made explicit by Aristophanes: the "great thoughts" of Pausanias' lovers who toppled a tyrannical regime are the unarticulated goal of the longings of Aristophanes' lovers who are always on their way to a renewal of their original assault upon the rule of the Olympian gods.

32. Cf. *Statesman* 293a–e, 296e–298a.

33. Aristophanes sees this consequence of Eryximachus' account and, therefore, retains his antinomian understanding of eros while rejecting his claim that such eros is according to nature.

34. Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* I.7.xi.

35. Thucydides I.122.3, 124.3.

36. Cf. *Protagoras* 324e–325d.

37. Cf. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 108–109; also Benardete, *The Tragedy and Comedy of Life*, 89–90.

38. It is this identification that leads Eryximachus to offer in the name of scientific mind an account of nature, human nature, and the human good from which mind has been entirely excluded.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Aristophanes thus rejects Socrates' apparent support of this Eryximachian claim in the second, third, and tenth books of the *Republic*. Socrates, by contrast, appears there to put his trust in the "low but solid ground" of the arts, rather than the beautiful speeches of the poets.

2. Paul Ludwig is therefore both correct and incorrect in his suggestion that Aristophanes' "speech constitutes a phenomenology of eros rather than a geneology"—Paul W. Ludwig, *Eros and Polis: Desire and Community in Greek Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 76.

3. This, however, is in striking contrast to Aristophanes' plays in which natural and cosmic gods recurrently figure as divinities of the highest significance.

4. Cf. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 27–28.

5. E.g., *Birds* 1515–1765; *Peace* 362–431; cf. Ludwig, *Eros and Polis*, 79: "Plato's Aristophanes, like the real Aristophanes, implies that the gods exist only by convention."

6. Cf. Rosen, *Plato's* Symposium, 142–43.

7. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1454b 20–30.

8. *Odyssey* XIX.467–75.

9. Seth Benardete, *The Bow and the Lyre: A Platonic Reading of the Odyssey* (New York: Rowman and Littlefiled, 1997), 143–46.

10. Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers* 164–80; Aristotle, *Poetics* 1455a 4–7.

11. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1455a 17–21.

12. Cf. Ludwig, *Eros and Polis*, 55: "Incest . . . would be closer yet to having a cognate second self."

13. Cf. *Hipparchus* 228b–229d.

14. Cf. *Clouds* 1420–43.

15. In our view, Rosen is incorrect to insist that for Aristophanes eros is "fundamentally sexual" and that body is in all respects prior to soul (*Plato's* Symposium, 140). Nor can we agree with Mary Nichols who seems to take a similar view: "If the circular beings had souls that were not reducible to their bodies, they could not be severed into two. Humans long for sex as a means to unity, but it is only a corporeal unity with their other halves" Mary P. Nichols, "Socrates' Contest with the Poets in Plato's *Symposium*," *Political Theory*, 32, 2 (April 2004): 186–204.

16. Aristotle, *Politics* 1262b 13.

17. Cf. Benardete, "On Plato's *Symposium*," 173. Our ancient nature then is a *whole* that is distinct from the *unity* of the two souls that, according to Aristophanes, we mistakenly pursue as the goal of erotic longing.

18. Fear of the gods appears to be a phenomenon that is as much definitive of the experiences of soul as erotic longing. This is made evident when one considers that this fear is a terror before an invisible power that exercises its punitive wrath ultimately or most completely in the invisible realm of Hades upon the invisible being of the separate soul. Our fear of the unseen gods is a fear for that unseen being that we take to be definitive of what we are—the soul.

19. Cf. Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* 371b–c, 373c–d.

20. Cf. *Republic* 572e–575d; also Rosen, *Plato's* Symposium, 150.

21. Cf. Ludwig, *Eros and Polis*, 110: "Most of what humans perceive to be natural about themselves is, for Plato's Aristophanes, convention masquerading as nature."

22. Cf. Herodotus, *History* II.53.

23. *Philebus* 36c–40d.

24. The fact that Aristophanes calls both Apollo—who engineers the structure of soul we long to transcend—and Eros—who provides us with the hope of such transcendence—"healers" indicates the ultimate identity of the cause of our sickness and its alleged cure.

25. Cf. Nichols, "Socrates' Contest with the Poets," 191: "Aristophanes restores the divine, in the face of the sophistic enlightenment of the previous speakers, but in a way that makes it inaccessible to human beings."

26. Cf. *Odyssey* 568–626; also Plato, *Apology of Socrates* 40e–41c.

27. One might be tempted to understand the original revolt of the circle people against the Olympian order as an effort to "become as gods." Yet the "great thoughts" of our ancestors seem to have had their source not in a desire to do as Zeus does, but in an understanding that their origin in the beings that are first by nature renders them naturally superior to the first beings according to convention and that, therefore, they ought not to be subjected their rule.

28. Cf. Nichols, "Socrates' Contest with the Poets," 195.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Cf. *Sophist* 216c–d.
2. *Apology of Socrates* 29d.
3. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1171b 29–31.
4. *Phaedo* 99c–100b.

5. "Zeus" is simply another name for necessity, as Aristophanes had already made clear.

6. Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, 158; Cf. *Hippias Major* 281a–282a.

7. Cf. Benardete, "On Plato's *Symposium*," 176.

8. Cf. Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* 4.2.53–54.

9. Cf. Nietzsche, *Description of Ancient Rhetoric* in *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, S. L. Gilman, C. Blair, and D. J. Parent, trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 59.

10. *Phaedo* 68c–69e.

11. Herodotus, *History* II.53.

12. Cf. *Apology of Socrates* 26d.

13. For an alternative account regarding Agathon's understanding of the relation between the beautiful and the good see Rosen, *Plato's* Symposium, 194.

14. Cf. Thucydides II.41, V.105.

15. In this Plato simply follows Homer's lead, insofar as the latter shows the self-undermining character of Achilles bid publicly to displace Agammenon's conventional preeminence with his own natural preeminence.

16. *Odyssey* XI, 601–604.

17. *Protagoras* 315c–e.

18. Ibid. 316d–317c.; cf. *Hippias Major* 281a–d.

19. Cf. *Gorgias* 449a, 451d–452e; *Phaedrus* 261a–262c.

20. *Sophist* 216c–d. Is this to suggest that there is an ultimate identity between Homer and Socrates? Is Homer a philosopher before the fact? Or is Socrates in some way a practitioner of the art of image-making?

21. Cf. Thucydides II.40–41, 43.

22. Cf. *Republic* 505d–e.

23. *Lysis* 216c–d.

24. I am indebted to Ronna Burger for this insight.

25. *Republic* 436a–441e, 493a–c.

26. Ibid. 369c–d, 373b.

27. Benardete, *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 153.

28. Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, 213; Benardete, *The Argument of the Action*, 169.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. I am indebted to Peter Vedder for this insight.

2. Insofar as Eros is said to be a god and is representative of the gods in general, all of the previous speeches implied that the beautiful gods are in fact ugly and bad.

3. Socrates, nevertheless, will reverse Phaedrus' attributions of the good to the beloved and the beautiful to the lover. Ultimately, Socrates will attribute the good to the one who loves and the beautiful to the deathless, but equally lifeless, object of love—the beautiful itself.

4. In this respect, the years have not changed him: he still feels wonder and perplexity before the specious beauty of Agathon's speech (198b).

5. Benardete, "On Plato's *Symposium*," 177–78.

6. That the need ingredient in erotic desire is not linked immediately and nonproblematically to a determinate object of satisfaction has been made clear by the various incompatible accounts that have been offered on this topic at the banquet.

7. That Plato should portray Aristophanes as subject to this error, however, might seem unjust: in the "wisest" of his comedies (*Clouds* 522) Aristophanes certainly does portray the common man (Strepsiades and Phedippides) in relation to the exception (Socrates). Nonetheless, even or especially in the *Clouds*, Aristophanes appears to abstract from the city of arts and to portray the city primarily in terms of the city of law.

8. Odyssey XVII, 345–53.

9. *Phaedrus* 275b.

10. Cf. Benardete, "On Plato's *Symposium*," 179: Diotima "somehow foresaw the coming of the plague to Athens and postponed it for ten years. Rather than the plague exhausting itself in an uncrowded city, Diotima's action served to multiply its virulence when all the country people had been jammed into Athens at the start of the Peloponnesian War in 432 B.C. If Diotima had not interfered and everything else had remained the same, Athens would have almost completely recovered from the plague by the start of the war, and its outcome would fairly certainly have been an Athenian victory."

11. Xenophon, *Hellenica* V.2.

12. The *Laws*, in dramatizing the export of Socratic philosophy to an alien terrain, is representative of all of Plato's dialogues.

13. Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, 187.

14. Cf. *Euthyphro* 14b–e. According to both Adeimantus' argument in Book Two of the *Republic* (363e–364e, 365e–366a) and the Athenian stranger's argument in Book Ten of the *Laws* (906c–907d), if the gods were responsive to gifts or bribes, this would necessarily compromise their justice.

15. There would, of course, still be this difference between the two: Diotima's Eros binds together, Eryximachus' separates apart.

16. We cannot agree with Rosen's assessment of Diotima and her account, namely, that "as both prophet and woman, Diotima is passive with respect to the gods. She cannot rebel against them, but neither can she explain them"; and that consequently in her teaching "philosophy is presented . . . as a divinely sanctioned and directed" activity (*Plato's* Symposium, 225, 199).

17. *Hippias Major* 289a–b.

18. Aphrodite arose from the foam of the sea as it mingled with the sperm of the member of Uranus castrated and discarded by his son Cronos and it was prophesied that a son of Metis would overthrow Zeus precisely as Zeus had overthrown Cronos—*Theogony* 176–98, 886–900.

19. Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, 194.

20. Cf. Benardete, "On Plato's *Symposium*," 180.

21. She has now made clear, therefore, that the "daimonic man" is not the wise man in regard to priest-craft, but the philosopher.

22. Benardete, "On Plato's *Symposium*," 180.

23. For an alternative interpretation see Rosen, *Plato's* Symposium, 288. Whether or not Eros may also be said to be the prior unity of mortal and immortal

in whatever sense Diotima may ultimately give to these contraries is a question she saves for the second half of her speech.

24. Benardete, "On Plato's *Symposium*," 180.

25. Seth Benardete, "On Plato's Sophist" in *The Argument of the Action* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 335.

26. Aristophanes, *Wealth* 415–609.

27. *Clouds* 250–365, 627–54, 783–90. That Socrates portrays himself as a woman seems to be motivated by his desire to rival Aristophanes who, in the *Clouds*, also portrayed himself in female guise (575–94). For reasons that have been made clear, however, Socrates does not, like Aristophanes, portray himself as a goddess, merely a wise woman.

28. *Clouds* 358–63.

29. *Clouds* 1303–1444; cf. *Birds* 138–43, 410–12, 1706–65.

30. *Phaedrus* 251a–b, 252d–253b.

31. Benardete, "On Plato's *Symposium*," 179.

32. Whereas Athena, in consequence of Zeus' ingestion of Metis, springs from her fathers' forehead fully armed, Poros is the pacific son of a Metis liberated from her incorporation into Zeus and his political rule.

33. Cf. Nichols, "Socrates' Contest with the Poets," 198: "Without the [love of the beautiful], love of the good merges into love of one's own."

34. *Phaedo* 99d–100a; *Republic* 508b–c; also Ronna Burger, *The Phaedo: A Platonic Labyrinth* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1999), xvi–xvii.

35. As a consequence Diotima's account is shadowed by precisely the opposite difficulty that confronted Eryximachus: whereas he failed to account for the coming to be of the individual and sexual generation, she fails to account for the ceasing to be of the individual and death, though her entire explanation of animal eros presupposes the striving to overcome it.

36. Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, 221.

37. Benardete, "On Plato's *Symposium*," 182.

38. *Laws* 636a–d.

39. Thucydides VI.24.

40. According to her account as it stands, there is no essential difference between the most trivial confessional lyric and the achievements of Homer and Hesiod: both are simply directed to the preservation of the poet's "personality."

41. *Phaedrus* 270a; *Alcibiades I* 118b–c.

42. Thucydides II.41.

43. That, even if poetry were devoted in part to the immortalization of the self, it could achieve this goal only if it were devoted above all to understanding and self-understanding, that is, philosophy, Diotima has already implied: the nonphilosophical poet must necessarily take a specious or mutilated version of himself for his true self and therefore immortalize the alien in the mistaken belief that it is most his own.

44. That tragedy and comedy as forms of independent poetry cannot be the original whole of poetry is clear precisely from the fact that as independent poetry is split into competing and apparently exclusive genres. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle shows Homer to be the original one from which the two of tragedy and comedy have been divided (1448b34–1449a5).

45. This fact seems to explain how a lover of "all beautiful bodies" could be construed as superior to the love of one: Socrates' "promiscuity" regarding the beauties, which will be noted in Alcibiades' speech (222b), is superior to Pausanias' lasting devotion to Agathon.

46. Dramatically speaking, Socrates set the stage for this distorted presentation of his erotics from the very beginning of his speech by splitting himself into Diotima and the young Socrates. The effects of the beautiful have been operative all along.

47. It is the principle of Poros and the principle of those elements in the Athenian regime that are specifically Athenian: a politicized eros detached from philosophy and an independent poetry.

48. Two chief difficulties present themselves when one considers the necessary character of such an idea of ideas. On the one hand, if the beautiful is an idea, it is merely one among the plurality of beautiful ideas. But the beautiful is that which "causes" all beautiful ideas to be beautiful. They gain their status as monads, themselves by themselves, by participation in the monadic look of the beautiful. As Socrates explains, all the beautiful things are beautiful precisely through their participation in the beautiful itself. The beautiful itself, therefore, transcends and defines the class of beautiful ideas. But then it cannot be one among the plurality of beautiful ideas. The beautiful itself is not an idea. On the other hand, the participation of the ideas in the beautiful itself compromises their status as themselves by themselves. The beautiful itself cannot be an idea, but if it is not an idea and rather comprehends and encompasses the ideas, then the ideas cannot be ideas—they are no longer themselves by themselves but share in the look of the beautiful. If they are not ideas, however, they are not beautiful and they do not share in the look of the beautiful.

49. *Republic* 509b.

50. *Phaedo* 101c–d.

51. *Phaedo* 69a–b; cf. *Republic* 518d–e.

52. *Republic* 485a–487a; *Apology of Socrates* 38a.

53. Seth Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy: Plato's* Gorgias *and* Phaedrus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 149–54.

54. Cf. *Theages* 125e–126a.

55. *Republic* 330c.

56. *Phaedo* 64a.

57. Cf. Burger, The Phaedo*: A Platonic Labyrinth*, xxi.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. *Dithyramb* V.75; *Knights* 1320–30; cf. Scott, *Socrates as Educator*, 149.

2. *Apology* 21a.

3. Thucydides II.43.

4. Cf. *Phaedrus* 227c–d.

5. Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, 5.

6. As Aristophanes took his turn after Eriximachus, so he is given an opportunity to speak with Socrates after Alcibiades. Unfortunately, Aristodemus was not awake for the bulk of this exchange.

7. *Clouds* 1508–1509; cf. Scott, *Socrates as Educator*, 135.

8. *Laws* 640c–641a.

9. Strauss, *On Plato's* Symposium, 258. This combination seems to echo his first speech in Thucydides, wherein he declares before the democratic assembly that it belongs to him more than others to rule, and then solicits his fellow citizens' votes for his proposal regarding an invasion of Sicily and agrees to share command with Nicias and Lamachus (VI.16–18, 8).

10. Cf. *Republic* 360b–d, 604a.

11. Cf. ibid. 360e–362c.

12. Seth Benardete, *Plato's* Laws: *The Discovery of Being* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 51.

13. Cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1267a2–8.

14. *Alcibiades I* 105b–c; cf. *Alcibiades II* 141a–142b.

15. Cf. *Alcibiades I* 135c.

16. Ibid. 118b–c.

17. *Laws* 650a.

18. Aristotle, *Politics* 1265a 10–12.

19. Alcibiades seems not to admit that the human exists as a distinct class, through perhaps he ultimately recognizes that the shame he comes to feel before Socrates is appropriate to neither god nor beast.

20. As Rosen observes, "Alcibiades almost succeeds in transforming Socrates into a man of action" (Rosen, *Plato's* Symposium, 283).

21. *Laws* 658d.

22. One is put in mind of the gospel's recounting of the speeches of Jesus.

23. *Minos* 321a.

24. *Clouds* 1148–53, 1229, 1331–43.

25. That Socrates possessed no such rhetorical power to move the multitude is made clear by Plato in the *Apology*. Socrates' playful attempt to enlist Agathon to defend him against Alcibiades and his "love of lovers" (213d) indicates this same incapacity and distaste when it comes to defending himself. Until the very end of his life, Socrates made no attempt to offer a public defense of philosophy. His disinterest in this regard determined his disinterest in writing. That Socrates nevertheless possessed an extraordinary capacity to charm certain Athenian youths of noble temper is made clear by Plato and Aristophanes alike. Alcibiades in the *Symposium* represents both the remarkable character of that power to charm and its limits.

26. *Alcibiades I* 104a–105c.

27. Cf. *Republic* 341b–342e.

28. *Alcibiades I* 134c–135e.

29. Ibid. 188b, 127d.

30. Cf. *Cleitophon* 410b–e.

31. Cf. *Hipparchus* 225b–228a.

32. *Phaedo* 59a, 60b–c; *Phaedrus* 249a–251d.

33. The first half of the *Alcibiades I* leads to the perplexity regarding "the greatest things"—the just, the beautiful, and the good (118a–b)—the second half to the problem regarding knowledge of the self (128e–131b). The former, therefore, portrays Socrates' courage, the latter his moderation.

34. We cannot agree with Rosen's suggestion that Alcibiades has understood something decisive about Socrates and his philosophy, namely, that Socrates possesses

a "peculiarly unerotic nature" or that his "psyche was somehow defective" in regard to eros (Rosen, *Plato's* Symposium, 302–11, lxii, 5). As our analysis has attempted to show, Socrates in his philosophizing is for Plato paradigmatic of the truth of eros.

35. *Odyssey* IV, 242.

36. *Odyssey* V, 203–20.

37. Benardete, *The Bow and the Lyre*, 86–87.

38. *Apology of Socrates* 20d–e.

39. Leo Strauss, "Reason and Revelation" in Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 163; *Theaetetus* 151d.

40. Cf. *Sophist* 216c–d.

41. Though, in one sense, thoroughly disillusioned when it comes to moral virtue, the result of this disillusionment for Alcibiades is that he has come to behave in accordance with the demands of moral virtue for the first time, since it is in the wake of this experience that he becomes aware of his shameful condition.

42. Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1425–1426.

CONCLUSION

1. Cf. Spinoza, *Political Treatise* I.4.

2. *Poetics* 1448a 36–39.

3. Cf. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön*, chapter VIII.

4. Once again, Alcibiades takes on the aspect of the city of Athens insofar as it proved to be the precondition both for the separation of poetry and philosophy and for their unity in the art of Plato.

5. According to Alfarabi, the truth of what it is to be a reveler is presented by Plato in the *Phaedrus*—Abu Nasr al-farabi, *The Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, Muhsin Mahdi, trans. (New York: Free Press, 1962), 61–62. In this light, the interruption at the end of the *Symposium* is a setting of the stage for the Socratic speech that takes the place of the praise of Agathon.

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PHILOSOPHY

An original analysis of one of Plato's most well-known and pivotal dialogues, this study is based upon the effort to think together the most manifest themes of the *Symposium* (the nature of eros and the relation between poetry and philosophy) with its less obvious but no less essential themes (the character of the city and the nature and limitations of sophistic enlightenment). Author Steven Berg offers an interpretation of this dialogue wherein all the speakers at the banquet—with the exception of Socrates—not only offer their views on the nature of love, but represent Athens and the Athenian enlightenment. Accordingly, Socrates' speech, taken in relation to the speeches that precede it, is shown to articulate the relation between Socrates and the Athenian enlightenment, to expose the limitations of that enlightenment, and therefore finally to bring to light the irresolvable tension between Socrates and his philosophy and the city of Athens even at her most enlightened.

STEVEN BERG is Associate Professor of Philosophy
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